



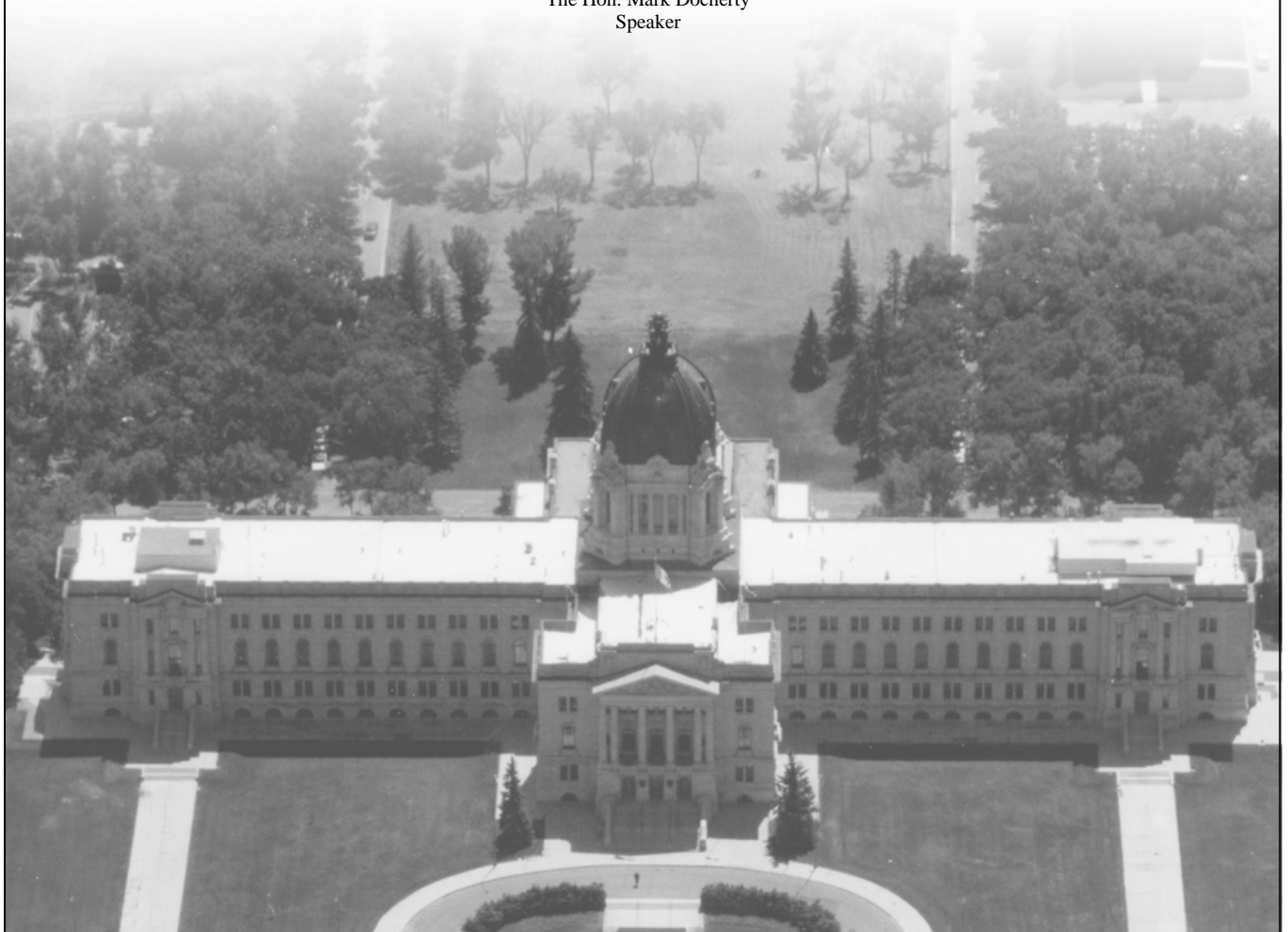
THIRD SESSION - TWENTY-EIGHTH LEGISLATURE

of the

Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

(HANSARD)
Published under the
authority of
The Hon. Mark Docherty
Speaker



MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN
3rd Session — 28th Legislature

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Leader of the Opposition — Ryan Meili

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Party Standings: Saskatchewan Party (SP) — 48; New Democratic Party (NDP) — 13

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[The Assembly met at 10:00.]

[Prayers]

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Saskatchewan Rivers.

Hon. Ms. Wilson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you, seated in the west gallery is a group of 22 grade 9 students who have come all the way from Victoire, Saskatchewan, Se-Se-Wahum School, accompanied by their teachers Doreen Netmaker, Dean Rabbitskin, and the educational assistants Tina Dreaver, Nicole Netmaker, Evangeline Netmaker. So I'm pleased to have you in the gallery today and I would like everyone in the Assembly to welcome you to your Legislative Assembly. Thank you.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today I would like to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly, my daughter Shannon Harpauer has joined us again today. She is seated in your gallery and accompanying her is her very good friend, Lisa MacGillvray. So I would like everyone to welcome them to their Assembly.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Crown Investments.

Hon. Mr. Hargrave: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, to you and through you, I'd like to introduce a number of friends that are seated in your gallery, Mr. Speaker, good friends of mine, Alana Ross. Alana grew up in Shellbrook with some other famous people from there; I'm not sure who that would be. But anyway, she's in the health industry, has been in the health industry in our area for a number of years.

And with her is Robbie Ross. Robbie's a businessman in Prince Albert. He's a caterer in Prince Albert, has a catering company there, and as you can tell I've had the pleasure of partaking of his catering enterprises many times.

And there's someone else up there with them, and I think she's also from Shellbrook there, and I'm always pleased to see her. She's also a very good friend, and she might get introduced a little bit later. But I'm very pleased to introduce Krista Moe as well. So I'd like all members to join me in welcoming them all to their Legislative Assembly.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Biggar.

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you I'd like to introduce a friend of mine, the mayor of Borden, Saskatchewan, Jamie Brandrick. Please welcome Jamie to his Legislative Assembly. He's seated in the east gallery.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through

you to all members of this Legislative Assembly, I want to introduce a number of constituents from what I call the great constituency of Rosthern-Shellbrook, Mr. Speaker. We have with us, from the Leask colony, 23 students from grades 4 to 11, Mr. Speaker. I understand the grades 1 to 3 are down here as well. They're over at the Science Centre, and I understand you're going there as well shortly after. So we wish you all the best on your tour of our province's capital city, your tour of the legislature.

We have with them, Mr. Speaker, accompanied by their teacher Tonya Koal. I had a note saying that maybe Tim Martin would be here as well, and he isn't here. Tim was a defence partner of mine, and he gave me good practice on my three-on-ones and my four-on-ones because he'd hang around behind the opposition's net, Mr. Speaker. So you can share that with him when you get back.

Mr. Speaker, we have a number of parents as well that have accompanied their kids here today. A number of them, all with the last name Wollman, which is a common name in the Leask area. We have Helen, we have Brittany, we have Miriam, we have Marlene, we have Bruce Debusschere, and we have Barbie Wollman.

Mr. Speaker, as I said, from the community of Leask, I would like to welcome a number of constituents from our constituency. But, Mr. Speaker, a number of very valued people in the community with all of the hard work that they do, not only at the Leask colony but within the community more broadly. So welcome to your legislature today.

I almost did not forget, Mr. Speaker. I have the opportunity and a great opportunity here to be joined — she came in last night — in our legislature, and I'd ask all members of this legislature to help me in welcoming my wife, Krista Moe, here today.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Reiter: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you to this Assembly it's my privilege to introduce three guests who have just joined us in your gallery, Mr. Speaker, from the Saskatchewan medical society's government affairs and advocacy committee.

I had the opportunity to meet with them this morning. This is an annual visit they pay to the legislature, Mr. Speaker, and it's great to see them also engaged. Mr. Speaker, the three individuals in your gallery are Samuel Simonson, Alisha Beler, and Lara Witt. And I would ask all members to please give them a warm welcome to their Legislative Assembly.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Saskatoon Fairview.

Ms. Mowat: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to join in with the minister opposite in welcoming these student advocates here today from the Student Medical Society of Saskatchewan, the government affairs and advocacy committee. So we have Lara Witt, Alisha Beler, and Samuel Simonson.

And I know that we have a meeting coming up with them on

Tuesday as well. We see them every year coming and advocating as their day of advocacy in this Assembly, Mr. Speaker. We want to thank you for your important advocacy in this province. And I did hear Lara on the radio this morning; I think she did a fantastic job. You know, we end up talking to press quite often in this role. I think you're well suited and on your way to becoming a future politician. But I look forward to our meeting next week, and I would ask all members to join me in welcoming them to their Assembly.

PRESENTING PETITIONS

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Regina Rosemont.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise once again today to present petitions on behalf of concerned residents, families, local businesses from across Saskatchewan as it relates to the damage that the imposition of the PST [provincial sales tax] onto construction labour has had on this sector, the epitome of a job-killing tax, Mr. Speaker.

We've got a minister that's heckling across the floor, and while he does that many Saskatchewan workers are trying to figure out their futures, who have lost employment in this very important sector, Mr. Speaker, many that have had to leave Saskatchewan in pursuit of employment. And certainly a measure that has weakened this very important industry in our province.

The prayer reads as follows:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan call on the Sask Party government to stop saddling families and businesses with the costs of their mismanagement and immediately reinstate the PST exemption on construction and stop hurting Saskatchewan families and businesses.

These petitions today are signed by concerned residents of Eyebrow, Craik, and Central Butte. I so submit.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Saskatoon University.

Mr. Olason: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to rise today to present a petition from citizens who are opposed to the devastating federal government decision to impose a carbon tax on the province of Saskatchewan.

I'd like to read the prayer:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan take the following action: to cause the Government of Saskatchewan to take the necessary steps to stop the federal government from imposing a devastating carbon tax on the province.

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by the citizens of Saskatoon. I do so present.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Regina Lakeview.

Ms. Beck: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a

petition to restore public control over Wascana Park.

Mr. Speaker, those who have signed this petition wish to draw our attention to the following: that Wascana Park is a treasured urban park and conservation area that has been responsibly managed through an equal partnership between the city of Regina, the University of Regina, and the provincial government for over 50 years; that the government unilaterally gave itself majority control over the board of the Provincial Capital Commission through changes brought on by Bill 50; that the city and the University of Regina have both expressed an openness to return to the governance model that is based on equality; and that more and more people in Regina and right across this province are becoming concerned with the increasing commercialization of Wascana Park, and they would like to see it stopped.

Mr. Speaker, I'll read the prayer:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan call on the government to restore the governance structure of the Wascana Centre Authority and end the commercialization of Wascana Park.

Mr. Speaker, those who have signed this petition today reside in Regina. I do so present.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Saskatoon Nutana.

Ms. Sproule: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm rising today to present a petition calling for a public inquiry and forensic audit into the Regina bypass land scandal. The people who have signed this petition would like to bring to our attention the following: they're questioning why the government approved an outdated, dysfunctional, unsafe, \$2 billion, developer-influenced bypass within city limits. They are saying that land developers purchased 640 acres of land along Tower Road and had the Regina bypass moved to accommodate their developments. Thousands of people were impacted directly and lost their land, homes, businesses, access, life's work, health, history. And future land developers were paid up to 80 times more for their land than long-term land home and business owners.

The cost of the Regina bypass exploded from 400 million to now over \$2 billion. Vinci, a French contractor that is deeply rooted in scandals in Europe, was awarded the contract to build the \$2 billion Regina bypass. Premier Brad Wall signed an order in council to pay \$21.1 million for land that was only worth \$312,000. And after a hurried investigation, the RCMP [Royal Canadian Mounted Police] closed the file on the Regina bypass and GTH [Global Transportation Hub] land scandal and did not lay charges.

I'll read the prayer:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Government of Saskatchewan call for a judicial public inquiry and forensic audit into the entire Regina bypass land scandal.

Mr. Speaker, the citizens signing this petition here today are from the cities of Swift Current, Regina, and Saskatoon, and also from the communities of Redvers and Maple Creek. I so submit.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Regina Douglas Park.

Ms. Sarauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition calling for critical supports for survivors of domestic violence. Mr. Speaker, the individuals signing this petition today wish to bring to our attention the following: Saskatchewan has the highest rates of domestic violence amongst all of the provinces in Canada, and employees who are survivors of domestic violence should be able to take a leave of absence from their employment without penalty.

Mr. Speaker, this is what we've called for in our private member's bill that seeks to have five paid days' leave for survivors of interpersonal violence. Mr. Speaker, we're not asking for anything that doesn't exist in other jurisdictions. We should at least do what exists in other provinces considering how bad our record is. Manitoba has five days' paid leave. Ontario has five days' paid leave. Quebec has two days' paid leave. New Brunswick has five days' paid leave. PEI [Prince Edward Island] has three days' paid leave. Newfoundland and Labrador has three days' paid leave.

Mr. Speaker, implementing this provision and passing this legislation would not cost the government a dime, but it would save lives, Mr. Speaker, and studies have shown that in fact it saves employers money to have this provision in terms of retention costs.

I'd like to read the prayer:

We, in the prayer that reads as follows, respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan call on the Legislative Assembly to pass legislation providing critical support for survivors of domestic violence.

Mr. Speaker, the individuals signing the petition today come from Saskatoon. I do so present.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Regina Elphinstone-Centre.

Mr. McCall: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise to present a petition calling for a \$15-an-hour minimum wage in Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, the petitioners are well aware that under the Sask Party government that Saskatchewan has dwelt near the bottom of the pack when it comes to minimum wages in the whole of Canada, being either the second lowest or lowest for many years now, Mr. Speaker.

[10:15]

The petitioners point out that a minimum wage shouldn't be a poverty wage. They point out that a \$15-an-hour minimum wage will improve health and well-being and lift Saskatchewan workers out of poverty. And they point out that a \$15-an-hour minimum wage will benefit local businesses and support local economies by putting money in workers' pockets to spend in their community.

Mr. Speaker, in the prayer that reads as follows, the petitioners:

Respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of

Saskatchewan call on the Sask Party government to adopt a plan to raise the minimum wage to \$15 an hour for all workers here in the province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, this particular petition is signed by citizens from the great city of Prince Albert. I so present.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Lloydminster.

International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination

Ms. Young: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today, March 21st, marks the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. This year's theme focuses on mitigating and countering rising nationalist populism and extreme supremacist ideologies.

Mr. Speaker, it is very important to reiterate that all human beings are born free, with equal rights and dignities, and deserve the right to contribute constructively to the development and well-being of their societies.

In light of recent events, we must recognize that darkness and discrimination still exists in this world. Today serves as a reminder that as human beings it is our duty to protect other people, no matter their background.

It reminds us that we have the power to stand up to intolerance, but that we should also take pride in the diverse and welcoming province that we can live in. We must continue to push for tolerance, equality, and understanding in today's world. Even when darkness seems to prevail, we must not be discouraged. Fundamental human rights belong to everyone, and as leaders we can join together to protect our communities and strive for the elimination of racial discrimination, not just today but year round.

I now ask all members in this Assembly to please join me in recognizing elimination of racial discrimination day. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Saskatoon Centre.

Mr. Forbes: — I rise today to recognize International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. On this day in 1960 police opened fire and killed 69 people at a peaceful demonstration against apartheid in Sharpeville, South Africa. This tragedy provoked the United Nations to proclaim March 21st as the official day for the elimination of racial discrimination.

This year's theme is mitigating and countering rising nationalist populism and extreme supremacist ideologies. And we have indeed seen the rise of racism, intolerance, often targeting migrants, refugees, and indigenous people. We condemn the recent massacre of worshippers at the two mosques in Christchurch, where the perpetrator allegedly took inspiration from a similar massacre in Quebec City in 2017.

Mr. Speaker, we embrace our Muslim neighbours and friends in

this dark time and reaffirm our role in fighting hatred and fear here in Canada and around the world.

Mr. Speaker, as we marked Commonwealth Day last week, we were all called to action by the powerful words by Dr. Moolla, a local doctor born and raised near Sharpeville, that we not stand idly by as we see alarming actions, including the hateful words of some protestors at the yellow vest demonstrations being legitimized and normalized. We must speak out.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask all members to join me in recognizing this day and that we do all we can to ensure a diverse, inclusive, and racism-free Saskatchewan for our future generations. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Regina Rochdale.

The Stories of Immigrant Women Art Exhibition

Ms. Ross: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I, along with yourself and the member from Regina University and Regina Douglas Park, attended the opening of *The Stories of Immigrant Women*, an art exhibit featuring the artist Madhu Kumar, right here in the Cumberland Gallery.

Mr. Speaker, Madhu was born and raised in India where she earned two degrees, in education and in art. She moved to Canada in 2011 and pursued a fine arts degree with great distinction in 2017 from the University of Regina.

Mr. Speaker, Madhu's art has been featured across the world, and we are fortunate to feature this particular exhibit right here in our Legislative Building. For this exhibit, Madhu used her own experience of immigrating to Canada. She felt inspired by other immigrant women who were struggling, and this one woman particularly was struggling to raise her nine-year-old daughter by herself. She deeply sympathized with this woman as Madhu understood the pain of being a mother so far away from the support of family and friends.

The women featured in the paintings come from many different countries such as Syria, Afghanistan, Uganda, Mexico, Nigeria, Bangladesh, Bosnia, Vietnam, and Eritrea. Madhu captured the experience of many immigrant women on canvas and has been able to portray so many important stories of heartbreak, but also of triumph.

Mr. Speaker, I encourage everyone in this House to take the time to go to the Cumberland Gallery, observe the beautiful work of Madhu, and truly reflect on the stories of the women being featured in this beautiful artwork. Thank you so much, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Saskatoon Fairview.

World Down Syndrome Day

Ms. Mowat: — Mr. Speaker, today I rise to recognize and celebrate a special day. Today is World Down Syndrome Day, a day of global awareness started by Down Syndrome International that has been celebrated since 2006.

In 2011 the UN [United Nations] General Assembly declared March 21st as World Down Syndrome Day and invited all nations to observe World Down Syndrome Day in an appropriate manner, in order to raise public awareness of Down syndrome. Why did they choose March 21st, Mr. Speaker? It was selected to signify the uniqueness of the triplication of the 21st chromosome, which causes Down syndrome.

This is a day of celebration, but also of education. World Down Syndrome Day is an opportunity to learn about what Down syndrome is, what it means to have Down syndrome, and how people with Down syndrome play a vital role in our lives and communities. I encourage everyone to take some time today to learn more about Down syndrome and participate in activities held by awareness groups. I also encourage everyone to wear fun and mismatched socks today and to post on Twitter using #RockYourSocks to help raise awareness.

Although today is a good opportunity to celebrate, we should advocate every day for the rights, inclusion, and well-being of people with Down syndrome. While many communities are welcoming, we need to do more to make sure Saskatchewan is the best place to live with a disability.

Mr. Speaker, I invite all members to join me in celebrating World Down Syndrome Day. Thank you.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Saskatoon University.

Mr. Olauson: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Today I'm pleased to rise in the House to talk about the importance of mismatched socks. I do admit, Mr. Speaker, that I've had days where I've worn two different socks, but it certainly wasn't on purpose. But today you'll see lots of people doing this for a purpose. They will be doing it to help recognize World Down Syndrome Day.

Mr. Speaker, this day helps raise awareness of what Down syndrome is, what it means to have Down syndrome, and how people with Down syndrome play a vital role in our lives and communities.

The specific date of Down Syndrome Day is also very significant. The 21st day of the third month was selected to signify the uniqueness of the triplication of the 21st chromosome, which causes Down syndrome.

This Saturday I will be attending the Dine for a Difference dinner for AIM [Ability in Me], which is a program that helps individuals with Down syndrome reach their potential. Programs such as AIM and campaigns like Rock Your Socks serve as important reminders of inclusion. Our government realizes the value of AIM, and our commitment in the budget yesterday only reaffirms that commitment.

Mr. Speaker, I encourage everyone in this House and all Saskatchewan people to help celebrate the gifts and contributions of people with Down syndrome by putting on some mismatched socks today. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for The Battlefords.

Growth in Provincial Population and Construction Industry

Mr. Cox: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I'm very pleased to rise in the House and announce that Saskatchewan's population grew by 11,459 people in 2018. This brings our total population to 1,168,423 people. Saskatchewan has grown by nearly 160,000 people since 2007, which is the most growth in this province since the 1920s.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan's population growth in 2018 was driven by international migration of 15,203 people. We are very excited to welcome so many people from so many different countries. Their new and vibrant cultures and communities really add to the mosaic that is Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, our government is very proud of the work that has been done on the Saskatchewan immigrant nominee program. The SINP has seen incredible growth and success and has resulted in the program being allocated 6,000 nominations for 2019.

Mr. Speaker, with population growth also comes growth in our construction industries. In January investment in building construction increased by 15.3 per cent from December. And I think that bears repeating — increased by 15.3 per cent from December of last year. It puts us first in terms of percentage change among the provinces. I guess the construction industry doesn't listen to the member from Regina Rosemont. Residential building construction is also up by 20 per cent in that same period.

Mr. Speaker, the new provincial budget released yesterday is the right balance to keep our economy strong and growing.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Moose Jaw Wakamow.

Positive Reactions to Saskatchewan's Budget

Mr. Lawrence: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday the Finance minister delivered a balanced budget for Saskatchewan. "We really like the fact that we have a provincial government that wants to balance the budget. Not just wants to, promised to, and then actually does it." That's the Saskatoon Chamber of Commerce which the opposition position seems to be at odds with.

"We applaud the Saskatchewan government and Premier Scott Moe on their historic investment in mental health and addictions." That's the Mental Health Commission of Canada.

"Saskatchewan agriculture continues to see a strong budget support Saskatchewan stock growers." Something for the ag critic from Regina to think about when he votes on this budget.

"As the mayor of Prince Albert, I couldn't be happier to see the government put in this year's budget to proceed with the construction plans to the new Victoria Hospital." Mayor Dionne of Prince Albert.

Here's one I really like, Mr. Speaker: "We are thrilled for the students and families who have waited patiently for this

announcement and whose children will have the opportunity to open what promises to be a leading-edge joint facility." Sean Chase, director of education for Holy Trinity School.

Yesterday's budget delivers for Saskatchewan families, Mr. Speaker. If the opposition stands against it, then they aren't off balance, Mr. Speaker. They're just out of touch with Saskatchewan.

QUESTION PERIOD

The Speaker: — I recognize the Leader of the Opposition.

Provincial Budget

Mr. Meili: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday we saw a lot of mission accomplished fanfare which was a strange sort of self-congratulation for a budget that increased the provincial debt by \$1.8 billion — nearly \$2 billion of debt that has continued to climb under this government, set to reach \$26 billion by 2022. That's \$22,000 per woman, man, and child across this province, Mr. Speaker.

And not just the debt, but this was a budget with a huge deficit. Maybe not by narrow accounting definitions, but there's a massive deficit in our classrooms, a deficit in our classrooms because we haven't got back to 2016 levels of funding despite 7,000 new students since that time. A deficit in our underfunded and overburdened seniors' care homes. A deficit in the growth in homelessness and the one-quarter of Saskatchewan children who are living in poverty, Mr. Speaker.

Why all the hype? Why all the bravado for a budget that was so off balance with what we really need?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Mr. Speaker, we are very proud of the budget that was introduced yesterday, a budget that has the right balance for the province of Saskatchewan, a budget that, in the case of education, had the largest education budget ever introduced in the province of Saskatchewan's history, Mr. Speaker. The same with health care, Mr. Speaker, the same with social services.

Mr. Speaker, this is a budget that the people of this province can be proud of because it continues to invest in building classrooms, Mr. Speaker, for our children to attend. We're going to have a new school, new schools in our capital city of Regina, Mr. Speaker. We're going to have new schools in the city of Moose Jaw, Mr. Speaker. We're going to be planning for a new school in the city of Saskatoon, Mr. Speaker, and continuing with the construction of existing schools in Weyburn and Rosthern, Mr. Speaker. Forty-two built; many more to come.

[10:30]

The Speaker: — I recognize the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Meili: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Amidst all that fanfare that we hear from that side vaunting a budget that left us with an increase of \$1.8 billion in debt, we haven't seen a lot of fanfare about one of their choices, which was the choice to double the

PST. Double the PST and no change in that choice in yesterday's budget, a choice, a change that has made life more difficult for Saskatchewan people, that has hurt our economy and hurt families.

[Interjections]

The Speaker: — Order, please. I recognize the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Meili: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There was no change in that choice that has made life more difficult for Saskatchewan families and has hurt our economy. Retail sales have been flat for five years and fell last year, a big sign of a failing economy, Mr. Speaker. We also see families paying \$800 more in PST every year. We've seen the Sask Party shift taxes from those who can pay the most to those who can afford the least. And as a result, so many families across this province, an increasing number, aren't able to pay their mortgages, their property taxes, or their utility bills.

How is that a balance when the choices, and they are choices of this government, are breaking the bank for families that are already stretched? And why was there no hope in this budget for those families who are struggling today?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Moe: — Mr. Speaker, three years ago we embarked on a challenge, Mr. Speaker, with that budget of shifting our reliance on resource revenues to consumption taxes here in the province, Mr. Speaker. We were very clear for that. But this begs another question, Mr. Speaker, with respect to the opposition, is would they borrow for capital here in the province of Saskatchewan? Their NDP [New Democratic Party] friends in British Columbia do it, Mr. Speaker. They'll have their number on their fundraising list, Mr. Speaker.

But the fact of the matter is, is the current government here in the province of Saskatchewan, we do build hospitals, Mr. Speaker. They closed them. Mr. Speaker, the fact of the matter is, is that we do build schools in this province, Mr. Speaker: 42 and counting. They closed 176 of them, Mr. Speaker. We build highways. We make our highways safer, Mr. Speaker. We have way more doctors working in the province of Saskatchewan. We have way more nurses, way more schools, way more funding for education, Mr. Speaker, way more highways being built, and we have way more people that live in this province, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we understand there's more work to do. But this budget that was introduced yesterday is the right balance for the people of this province.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Regina Rosemont.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Mr. Speaker, this Sask Party budget does nothing to address the damage they've done to people or to our economy. They've tripled the debt. They've doubled the take on the PST, flattened the economy, and left students with the support they so desperately need.

And revealed in the budget document is the fact that average families are paying \$778 more of PST under this government's

plan. In just four years, that's a 70 per cent increase. That's hurting household budgets, and it's hurting businesses too. It helps explain what's happened with retail sales, retail sales that have actually shrunk this last year despite being naively predicted to grow under this government, retail sales that have actually been flat for an entire five years despite growth in population. That's worse than stagnation. That's decline.

How is it that the Sask Party can say that their budget is balanced when it contains nothing to fix the damage that they've caused to households and to our economy by doubling the take on the PST?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Ms. Harpauer: — Mr. Speaker, I find that question very interesting coming from a party that doesn't understand the difference between debt and deficit, and quite frankly has absolutely no plan on how they would pay for all of their promises and all of their pressures for increased funding, Mr. Speaker.

Just a reality check for the NDP, Mr. Speaker, is what is the difference between our tax regime that we have when we've decreased the personal income tax so substantively and, including the increase to the PST, what's the difference from when the NDP were allowed to govern this province and people were leaving in droves? Well let's take the combined income tax and PST for a single person that was earning \$40,000 of income, Mr. Speaker. They still are paying \$767 less in taxes than they were when the NDP were governing, Mr. Speaker. Combined income and PST for a family of four earning \$50,000, Mr. Speaker, they're paying \$2,325 less than they were under the NDP, Mr. Speaker. Let's take a family that were earning 75,000, Mr. Speaker: \$1,791 less than they were under the NDP.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Regina Rosemont.

State of the Construction Industry

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll draw the attention of members opposite, the Finance minister, to the black and white in her budget document page 60, where it shows an average family is paying almost \$800 more in PST in four years alone, a 70 per cent increase because of the choice of that government. There's nothing here to help families manage the costs that they're incurring, the hikes that they can't afford, and nothing to mitigate the hit on local businesses and our economy.

There's nothing to help boost our construction industry that's so vital, that's been weakened by the choices of this government. This is a sector that's put thousands of workers out of work, investment that's been weakened, projects that have been shelved. And so many Saskatchewan workers, skilled labourers who are proud to build their province that have been forced to leave our province — a sector that was looking for some hope in this budget but didn't get anything in return.

Why didn't the Sask Party do the right thing with this budget and scrap the PST off construction labour to help fire up this economy and put people back to work?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Trade.

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Well thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The member opposite referenced retail trade. I want to touch on that before getting to the construction numbers. The reality is, in retail trade, since 2007 in this province, retail trade has increased over 48 per cent, Mr. Speaker.

And with regard to the construction numbers, I found it interesting how in his first question he didn't reference construction. I think we know why, Mr. Speaker. We got today, we got today a report from Statistics Canada that has put the real numbers on the table, Mr. Speaker. And what did those numbers say? Over the course of the last year, this province saw the largest increase in building and construction in the entire country: 15.3 per cent increase, Mr. Speaker.

With regard to residential construction over the course of the last year, Mr. Speaker, the largest increase in the entire country, up 30 per cent in the last year, Mr. Speaker. Once again, his facts are wrong. You can't trust what they say.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Regina Lakeview.

Funding for Education

Ms. Beck: — Mr. Speaker, the deficit in our classrooms should put this government to shame when they try to talk about balance. Yesterday's budget adds only \$14.5 million to operating budgets at a time when classrooms are already at a breaking point.

This fails to keep up with rising costs and is blind to the 7,000 additional students and the tens of millions of dollars that this government has cut from our classrooms over the past three years, and means that struggling students will continue to struggle, that overstretched teachers will continue to stretch, and we'll continue to lose ground in this vital investment in our future.

Mr. Speaker, this morning I heard the Finance minister chuckling in an interview when asked about school board concerns. To the minister and the Deputy Premier: after all the conversations he's had and the raised expectations, how did he fail to convince his cabinet colleagues of the severity of the problem in our classrooms?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Mr. Speaker, I'm very proud to be part of a government that yesterday delivered a balanced budget in this province, Mr. Speaker, the right balance for the people of Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, this is the largest operating grant to school divisions in the history of this province: \$26.2 million added to the operating grant yesterday, Mr. Speaker, which exceeds the amount of money that was taken out of the budget a number of years ago, given the amounts that were added last year, Mr. Speaker.

Now the member opposite and the members across are saying, you know, we're not listening to the people of this province, Mr. Speaker, when it comes to challenges in our education system. They should go and talk to the parents at St. Pius, Mr. Speaker. They should go talk to the parents at Argyle School, Mr. Speaker, the parents in Moose Jaw about the fact that we're listening. And I can tell you they're going to get a resounding response from

those parents when it comes to listening, Mr. Speaker.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I heard the Leader of the Opposition yesterday say it's not about money, Mr. Speaker, it's about results. Now, Mr. Speaker, we understand that there's more resources that we need in our classrooms. We're going to continue to listen to our classrooms, Mr. Speaker. We're going to continue to listen to our teachers as we move forward in this sector. But our commitment to public education is clear.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Regina Lakeview.

Ms. Beck: — Mr. Speaker, we're happy that that minister finally found his way over to Argyle and Pius after those schools have been waiting for over a decade in crumbling conditions. But, Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Education has stood in this House day after day to say he's listening to teachers. Many had hoped that he'd actually heard them, but yesterday's budget dashed those hopes.

Yet again this government has failed students and classrooms and disrespected teachers and boards. Mr. Speaker, our schools remain at a breaking point, and instead of the investment that this minister had been trumpeting, he failed to deliver for teachers, parents, and for school boards. How can this minister defend his betrayal of expectations and his failure to deliver what is so clearly needed in our classrooms?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Education.

Hon. Mr. Wyant: — Mr. Speaker, we got a good response from our partners in the education sector about our budget yesterday. And I want to correct the member's number, Mr. Speaker: \$26.2 million added to the operating budget with respect to school divisions, the single biggest inflationary factor being the CBA [collective bargaining agreement], which this government has fully funded in this budget, Mr. Speaker.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we continue to have these conversations. And as I mentioned before, Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition talks about the fact that it's not about money, it's about results. And we agree, Mr. Speaker. That's why in the budget yesterday we included half a million dollars to start working on innovative agendas to address the challenges that I've heard in the classroom over the last year, Mr. Speaker.

We're going to have those conversations. We'd love to hear from the member opposite as to what her ideas are, Mr. Speaker, with respect to finding innovative solutions to deal with the challenges in our classroom, Mr. Speaker. But I can tell you this: it's not just about money, Mr. Speaker. It's about being innovative. It's about being innovative with respect to how we deliver public education, Mr. Speaker.

Now the member doesn't want to listen to challenges, Mr. Speaker. But certainly, Mr. Speaker, the amounts that were in the budget yesterday and last year, Mr. Speaker, confirm our commitment to public education.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Cumberland.

Power Costs for Northerners

Mr. Vermette: — Mr. Speaker, for years northerners have raised

the concerns over high power bills we pay in the North. I, along with the member from Athabasca, have raised this issue many times in this Assembly, but nothing ever changes under this government.

A new report from Southend shows that people in that community are paying much more than other communities. Power bills are sometimes over \$1,000 a month, and many elders just can't afford to pay. Has the minister reviewed the report from Peter Ballantyne Cree Nation, and will he work with the chief and other northern leaders to find a solution to this serious problem?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of the Environment.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member opposite for the question. Mr. Speaker, I have in fact had a look at the report, Mr. Speaker. I had an opportunity to speak with Chief Beatty by phone yesterday, and I have committed to meeting with him. It's my hope that we can meet in the first week of April when it's convenient for his schedule as well, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the report does raise what I think are some discrepancies in terms of why power rates would be higher in one of those northern communities versus the others. And so we certainly want to sit down with some technical people to determine why that would be the case, Mr. Speaker.

What I would also urge and what I did urge to the chief is that any resident, wherever they live in the province, can self-report their own meters on a monthly basis so that they don't build up large estimates over time, Mr. Speaker, and then are left with a large lump sum bill that is in some cases over \$1,000 on one particular bill, Mr. Speaker. So there are methods and there are avenues for individuals to have certainly a better bill balance when it comes to paying that bill, Mr. Speaker. But certainly I'll be meeting with the chief in the coming weeks.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Cumberland.

Mr. Vermette: — Mr. Speaker, it's not just people in Southend who are struggling with high power bills in northern Saskatchewan. I get calls in my office all the time from people in La Ronge, Sandy Bay, Deschambault Lake, Grandmother's Bay, Wollaston Lake, and many other communities.

Too many elders can't afford to pay these high bills. When they can't pay, they are forced to go without their heat or lose food that's in their fridges and freezers. What does the Minister for SaskPower going to do to address all these high power bills throughout the North and work with many communities who are struggling?

[10:45]

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of the Environment.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Mr. Speaker, thank you very much. Mr. Speaker, we work with communities all across the province, including the North, when it comes to trying to reduce power consumption, particularly in areas where we know that electric heat is the number one source of heat, Mr. Speaker.

But I want to be clear. The way that power bills are charged, Mr. Speaker, the way that the rate is determined is the exact same way it was under the members opposite. There is only one rate for residential classes, Mr. Speaker, within those different . . . There's several different subclasses, Mr. Speaker, obviously. But in terms of the rate that is determined, it is the exact same.

We want to work with those communities though to help them reduce their energy consumption, Mr. Speaker. We want to work with those communities to look at ways to make sure that their homes are energy efficient, Mr. Speaker, so that they are not using as much energy to heat the homes, Mr. Speaker. And again I would be happy, as we have in the past, as SaskPower has in the past worked with a number of communities to try to address some of these issues.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Regina Elphinstone-Centre.

Workplace Fatalities

Mr. McCall: — Mr. Speaker, last week the Workers' Compensation Board released some very troubling information. For the year 2018, the WCB [Workers' Compensation Board] provided a report for total injury rates. A quote from the release: "Most alarming in 2018 is the number of fatalities. There were 48 fatalities in 2018, an increase of 78 per . . ."

[Interjections]

The Speaker: — Order, please. Order, this side. I recognize the member for Regina Elphinstone-Centre. Continue.

Mr. McCall: — Mr. Speaker, quoting from the WCB report: "Most alarming in 2018 is the number of fatalities. There were 48 fatalities in 2018, an increase of 78 per cent from 2017." Mr. Speaker, that's a devastating 21 more fatalities than in 2017, and it's 11 more worker fatalities than the 15-year average.

To the Minister Responsible for Workplace Safety: what is his understanding of why 2018 was such a deadly year for Saskatchewan workers? And what concrete steps will this government be taking with partners to make certain that we never have another year as deadly as 2018 was for Saskatchewan workers?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Justice.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The issues that the member opposite raises are ones that we take very, very seriously, and I think all citizens of the province should. The numbers that he puts forward are accurate and they are absolutely unacceptable.

We had 48 fatality claims last year. Six of those were related to the Humboldt Broncos crash. Forty-one per cent of those claims were related to occupational diseases. It's absolutely unacceptable. One injury is one too many. The safety of our workers has to be something that's a great priority, not just to the government but to every employer and every employee across the province.

We had nearly 20 years of relatively uninterrupted declines in our

injury rates and in our fatality rates. Some variations, but this is the first year where there's been any significant increase and it's certainly troubling.

Mr. Speaker, some of the things that we're doing are including some additional occupational health officers this year. We've increased the funding for three. Whether they'll use that for analysts or whether they'll use it for direct OHOs [occupational health officer], time will tell. We've partnered with WorkSafe Saskatchewan on Mission: Zero. I can say this: that 88 per cent of the workplaces in Saskatchewan have achieved Mission: Zero already. In 2018, 28,500 received OHS [occupational health and safety]-related training through WCB and WorkSafe Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, there's a lot of work left to do. We've added an additional prosecutor as part of this year's budget, and we know that we have more work to do.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Regina Elphinstone-Centre.

Mr. McCall: — Mr. Speaker, certainly we welcome the additional resources that were announced in yesterday's budget, just as we'd welcomed additional resources in the previous year's budget. So we welcome any additional resources that can be thrown against this fight, Mr. Speaker, but we still had one of the worst years in the history of this province when it came to worker fatalities.

When we'd raised this issue in December, Mr. Speaker, we were here with the president of the Saskatchewan Federation, Lori Johb. At that time, they were calling for a convening of all the relevant partners to develop and implement a worker fatality emergency crisis strategy. The minister had responded favourably to that, in terms of the words, but we want to know what the strategy is. We want to know where the minister stands on particular actions in terms of better information, in terms of better publishing of incident reports, as happens in other jurisdictions, Mr. Speaker.

So we want to have the commitments from the minister on those points because again, additional resources are good, but on the end of one of the worst years in the history of this province when it comes to worker fatalities, we obviously need to do better, not just in terms of resources but in terms of information for workers and in terms of working with the sector as a whole.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Justice.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — In the last week or 10 days the new deputy minister has started working in that position over there. The position was vacant since the death of Richard Murray a number of weeks ago. Job one for that new deputy minister is the reduction of injuries and the reduction of fatalities in our province. On the first day of the deputy minister's work, she contacted Lori Johb, the president of Saskatchewan Federation of Labour, to try and engage with the Saskatchewan Federation of Labour to make sure we're doing the best possible strategies.

We've also entered into some contractual work with Sean Tucker from the University of Regina to give the best kind of statistical analysis so that we're using the resources in the best manner

possible.

Mr. Speaker, our legislation has some of the highest fines in Canada. We want to continue the relationships that we have with the Saskatchewan Federation of Labour and with the other entities across the province to make sure that we're trying to have far better workplaces than we have now. I can't pass this off and say this was simply a statistical anomaly. This is something that we have to do better and we have to do right, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Regina Elphinstone-Centre.

Mr. McCall: — Again, I welcome the response from the minister. And I want to get a very specific comment from that minister in terms of a couple of items that are taking place in other jurisdictions. When SFL [Saskatchewan Federation of Labour] president Johb was here in December, Mr. Speaker, they'd referenced the need for publishing all incident reports in an accessible, online format as is done in British Columbia, and they called for a commitment for publishing all investigation reports in an accessible, online format similar to the process in Alberta. Will the minister make that commitment to making that happen here today?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Justice.

Hon. Mr. Morgan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We're aware of what the practices are in some of the different jurisdictions, particularly in Alberta in British Columbia, where incident reports are completed.

I'm told that in our province it's approximately a two-year lag between when an occurrence happens and when the process is completely done through the courts, information is provided to families. I've asked our officials to look carefully and see is there any method that we can have where we put information out earlier. I think the information is important, not just for the right of the public to know, but also for the right of workers to be able to understand and accept whether there are better things that they can do in their individual workplaces. So if the member opposite is asking for a commitment for more information on that, the answer is yes.

The Speaker: — Why is the minister on his feet?

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I ask for leave to make a statement.

The Speaker: — The minister has asked leave to make a statement. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — I recognize the minister.

STATEMENT BY A MEMBER

Withdrawal of Statement and Apology

Hon. Mr. Harrison: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. During question period in response to a question from the member for Rosemont, I said, quote, you can't trust their

numbers. I think the sentiment was obvious but of course the phrasing is unparliamentary and I'd like to withdraw and apologize.

The Speaker: — Thanks for that.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

The Speaker: — I recognize the Government Whip.

Mr. Lawrence: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to table the answers to questions 54 through 57.

The Speaker: — Tabled, 54 through 57. I recognize the Government Whip.

Mr. Lawrence: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to order the answer to question no. 58.

The Speaker: — Ordered, 58. I recognize the Government Whip.

Mr. Lawrence: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to table the answers to questions 59 and 60.

The Speaker: — Tabled, 59 and 60.

SPECIAL ORDER

ADJOURNED DEBATES

MOTION FOR APPROVAL OF BUDGETARY POLICY (BUDGET DEBATE)

[The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Ms. Harpauer that the Assembly approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.]

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Regina Rosemont.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to enter back into the budget debate here today. I put a lot onto the record yesterday in this Assembly, so my remarks will simply support those statements, expand into a few other areas.

But certainly this is a budget, of course, that's off balance, Mr. Speaker, with the priorities of Saskatchewan people, and certainly off balance from a financial or a fiscal perspective. As well it's tripled the debt, Mr. Speaker. It's doubled the take on the PST. It's flattened the economy through so many measures and choices of this government. And it fails to invest in our classrooms at a time where our students so desperately need those supports. And it fails to support the most vulnerable, Mr. Speaker.

Of course we had the devastating budget of just a couple of years ago, Mr. Speaker, which was a betrayal of Saskatchewan people, something that was never run on by the governing party, Mr. Speaker. And that hit people hard on so many fronts, from the billion-dollar tax hike to the sell-off attempts of the Crown corporation, to the sell-off of STC [Saskatchewan Transportation

Company], to cuts to the very most vulnerable on so many fronts, Mr. Speaker. And I think of the rental housing supplement, which has been a loss to so many who need it most, some of the most vulnerable within our communities, some of the most vulnerable people and families. Mr. Speaker, no restoration or repair on that front.

Actually more uncertainty, though, for the very most vulnerable with the elimination of assistance programs, Mr. Speaker, assistance programs that should be improved, Mr. Speaker, but eliminated with no detail, no certainty for those who live on the tightest of margins and who deserve absolute certainty when it comes to the incredibly tight dollars — and insufficient dollars — that they receive.

I identified yesterday a glimmer of hope around some of the mental health dollars and addictions dollars: an important first step, Mr. Speaker, an important action to responding to the unacceptable gaps in services and supports that people need and deserve across our province who are dealing with mental health pressures and addictions, Mr. Speaker. And so these are dollars that we welcome, but the work continues because the gaps are completely unacceptable. And certainly this, you know, is only an important first step but insufficient in responding to the challenge.

And when we look at the crystal meth crisis that's ravaging the lives of families and people and communities throughout our province, Mr. Speaker, we simply don't see an adequate response on that front. And it comes at a real cost, Mr. Speaker. It's stealing people, stealing loved ones from families. It's stealing people from our communities. And it's connected back into crime and drug trade and gangs and community safety concerns as well that need to be actioned, Mr. Speaker. So the budget certainly isn't balanced fiscally. It's certainly not balanced when it comes to the priorities of Saskatchewan people.

You know, I was coming into the legislature here today out of that . . . It was a beautiful morning, spring morning with a beautiful sun across that beautiful park, that jewel within our province. A jewel within our province, Mr. Speaker. And I thought of what's going on in that park, Mr. Speaker: a sweetheart deal for those that have access to government, those that are the biggest donors of this party, Mr. Speaker. And it sort of reminded me of sort of the values and approach of this government on so many other fronts. This is a park that's a jewel, a gem, and that's there to be intended for all, Mr. Speaker. And instead we have a government who's making choices to offer benefit for the select few. This is a park that should be for all, Mr. Speaker, just as we should have a government that's there for all and not just the select few, Mr. Speaker.

[11:00]

We see the same sort of misguided values on this front as it applies to their treatment of our public finances, as it relates to things like the GTH land scandal, as it relates to our Crown corporations and the sell-off attempts and games that are being played, placing those Crown corporations that have been built by and for generations at risk, Mr. Speaker. And we see it in the economy, an economy that should be there for all, Mr. Speaker, not just the select few. And time and time again, we see these misguided values at play in this current Sask Party government.

It's become incredibly difficult for Saskatchewan people to take that Sask Party government at their word, Mr. Speaker, because they listened to what they had to say before the election, Mr. Speaker, and they saw the result afterwards. And we see it time and time again in places like budget day, Mr. Speaker, here in this legislature where the Sask Party uses it far too often more as a public relations exercise or a partisan exercise, Mr. Speaker, instead of something that's about the public's interest.

And we hear boasts, you know, for example around budgetary balance, year after year after year in this Assembly, Mr. Speaker. And, you know, I've observed those claims, those boasts, the spin year after year in this Assembly, and including many of the years that had historical highs in revenues supplied through a period of boom. This was a government that just couldn't get the job done when it came to taking care of our public finances, didn't save a dime, piled on public debt, drained the rainy day fund, Mr. Speaker, and left the economy weakened and people vulnerable for a period that we're going through right now, where there should have been some cushion, some protection, and some dollars to draw upon, Mr. Speaker.

So it's fair to say that trust has been eroded for Saskatchewan people with what this government says on budget day. And frankly they have very little credibility as a result of what they've said and what their actions have been over the last number of years.

I'm going to turn my attention just a little bit to the economy here. We have an economy that is not firing on all cylinders, Mr. Speaker. And there is pressures in the energy sector that contribute to that, Mr. Speaker. We have a government that's made deliberate choices that've made things worse, that have weakened that economy and that have hamstrung the recovery that Saskatchewan people should be counting on. You know, and it's clear when you look at the numbers and certainly when you listen to people, that there's a lot of hurt from this economy out there.

And we have an economy that's stagnant, flat retail sales over a five-year period. And I was surprised to hear this here today, and I shouldn't be surprised by things that come from the member from Meadow Lake, you know, the Minister for the Economy. But I was surprised here today for him to sort of tell a different narrative on retail sales. For a government to preside over a five-year flat period for retail sales is an incredibly telling measure, and it's damaging. It's an indicator, Mr. Speaker, of the financial well-being of households, Mr. Speaker. And it's an indicator that it's not good at the household level.

And of course that connects directly then to main streets of Saskatchewan, to local businesses across our province, Mr. Speaker. And it connects directly to the choices of that government, Mr. Speaker, who saw a slowing economy and chose to slam on the brakes with the imposition of the PST, doubling the take, Mr. Speaker.

And it's highlighted in the black and white of this government's budget book when you look at the 2009 intercity comparison of taxes and utilities, where it highlights that in just a four-year period, Mr. Speaker, using their numbers, the PST that the average family has paid is \$778 more than it was just four years ago. That provides a whole lot of hurt for Saskatchewan people,

Mr. Speaker. And it's hurting our economy as well.

You know, Mr. Speaker, that PST should have been scrapped. That's what we've been calling for. And there should have been some relief offered to households and to local businesses and to our economy.

Further, this government missed an important opportunity, something that's been proposed by the Leader of the Official Opposition, in creating thousands of jobs across Saskatchewan and supporting hundreds of businesses while cranking up the generation of very affordable renewable power, Mr. Speaker, through a program that he's pitched as Renew Saskatchewan.

Call it what they like, Mr. Speaker; we don't care about the branding. What we care is that we put people back to work and that we have investments that are affordable but that also reduce our emissions. It's, you know, a pretty special confluence here, Mr. Speaker — good actions for the economy, reduced power bills for Saskatchewan people, and a reduction of emissions allowing us to live up to obligations that we must around reducing emissions.

We saw no mention of fixing procurement from this government. This is a government of course that knows how to pile on debt, Mr. Speaker, and they'll suggest that they might be building things with that, Mr. Speaker. What we expect of our government is that we get value out of procurement, that when they spend the public dollar, Mr. Speaker, that they maximize the return to Saskatchewan people. And that includes, Mr. Speaker, making sure that local businesses aren't shut out from the tendering processes and that the world-class businesses within our province have a fair shot and that are engaged in that work, Mr. Speaker, maximizing certainly the value in getting us a better price point, Mr. Speaker, but also maximizing the value economically with the receipts that roll in and the revenues that roll in when we have employed workforces and businesses that are doing well.

I notice we're joined in the gallery here right now by a couple of folks who have been really dedicated to fighting for answers around that bypass, Mr. Speaker, that went off the rails by way of a project. And it's good to see them here today, and I hope they know as well the member from Nutana stood in this Assembly and put forward a petition that's been signed by so many across our province to fight for a judicial inquiry on that project, Mr. Speaker.

These choices matter. This was a bypass, Mr. Speaker, that was supposed to . . . that was pegged at \$400 million, Mr. Speaker, when members opposite told us that they'd studied it to death. That project, under their management went to an outfit from Paris, France, Mr. Speaker, with ties to Russia. And it went through the roof by way of the cost for Saskatchewan people, \$2 billion and counting. I'm not sure of the total, but it certainly defies common sense. And it didn't provide the kind of value economically or the kind of value from a taxpayer's perspective that anyone should count on when you're . . .

And the members opposite mention the word "safety." This is an official opposition, and me as a member, Mr. Speaker, fought for the attention for safety on those roads and the overpasses that were needed, Mr. Speaker. In fact at that time, at that time we had members opposite who failed to even go out to public

meetings with people who had lost loved ones along that artery. And what we didn't call for was a mismanaged project that generations will pay for.

You know, Mr. Speaker, it's interesting as well to see a weakened economy, weakened by the choices of this government, cut \$3 million out of local economic development. It's sort of the kind of command and control and consolidation of power that we've seen time and time again out of the Premier's office by this government, instead of trusting in local communities and local people and local businesses, Mr. Speaker, who know best.

And it's interesting as well, Mr. Speaker, I noted the change around the potash sector, Mr. Speaker. And the ministers, I can't speak on their presence, but I found it interesting, Mr. Speaker, and troubling how they went about this. You know, we are well on the record for a long period of time pushing for a review of royalties to make sure that we have a fair return to Saskatchewan people and that we maximize value for the people of the province. But in that we talked about an even-handed, transparent process, Mr. Speaker, one that wouldn't be providing surprises, that would take into account an understanding of the interplay between the thousands of jobs within that sector, Mr. Speaker, the investment that's so critical in this world-class industry, and then the direct return of royalties to the owners of that resource.

This government went at this change without any consultation with the industry, Mr. Speaker. That's not how you do it. It's bush league, Mr. Speaker. The world-class companies in this important industry deserve certainty, stability. They deserve to be at that table so that we make sure that, as we make adjustments to ensure a full and fair return for our resource, that it makes sure that that industry is able to operate in a stable environment with no surprises and that ensures strength and stability for decades to come, Mr. Speaker.

I didn't see much in the budget to work and expand on the incredible talent, the incredible entrepreneurs, the incredible knowledge we have in this province when it comes to value-added agriculture within this province, Mr. Speaker. I didn't hear much about working with the incredible opportunity when it comes to the tech sector, Mr. Speaker, that's growing and that has enormous potential to continue to grow in this province.

And I didn't hear much around improving our transportation system, Mr. Speaker, something so important to our province. We know we need to work to make sure we get market access addressed. We need pipeline capacity built to tidewater. This is important to our province. It's important to the producers of this province and all those that are working in the energy sector, and it's important to the bottom line of Saskatchewan to close the differential. And on this file, it's also important at this time that we stand strong and united and thoughtful and that we're willing to stand against as well, a few — a few, Mr. Speaker — who are trying to hijack this very important conversation with a platform of racism and hate, Mr. Speaker.

We need pipeline capacity built out, Mr. Speaker. We need to do that with a united voice out of the West and out of Saskatchewan. And we need to stand united and strong against those that are trying to hijack this conversation as well.

We didn't see anything as well around improving that rail

transportation system, Mr. Speaker, that's so important to producers and all the exporters of this province. No action to lean into the underperforming duopoly, Mr. Speaker, and make sure that we can get some competition on the rails through things like joint running rights or through enforcing interswitching or shifting the responsibility of demurrage from producers and on to shippers, Mr. Speaker, to ensure that there is an actual incentive for that rail system to perform. We didn't see any of that.

I'd also like to touch on one of my other critic portfolios, that being municipalities, Mr. Speaker, who are on the front lines of delivering services and growing communities that are very important to the quality of life, that are hubs of economic activity and that have these incredibly proud and important rural municipalities, Mr. Speaker, delivering services across vast distances, sometimes dealing with challenges as well around population. So I want to say thank you to those municipalities, rural and urban, for what they do across the province.

I know they have recognized value in having some certainty to revenue sharing, Mr. Speaker. I know I've heard concern with it being reduced by this government at a time where they have many burdens and at a time where the PST, Mr. Speaker, equates to some sort of tax on another level of government, sort of a double taxation, Mr. Speaker. And so when you look at a situation like that in Moose Jaw, you have a community that's received, they're telling us \$200,000 more in revenue-sharing dollars, but that's eaten up completely by the \$800,000 more that they're paying for PST, Mr. Speaker.

[11:15]

Of course we need to be there as partners. I didn't see much in the budget around work on things like paratransit, or of course on the very important matter of intercity transport, Mr. Speaker, after the shameful sell-off of STC, Mr. Speaker, leaving far too many without the kind of accessibility that they so deserve.

And I didn't see anything about cannabis revenues being shared back, as they were supposed to in part with municipalities, Mr. Speaker. And of course this is, you know, important. And of course we've seen this government really fail on this entire file, Mr. Speaker, a government that — maybe it explains why things like the bypass goes off the rails — but can't even seem to, you know, properly sell cannabis to the people of Saskatchewan. Struggling to organize a structure that works for the people of the province, you know, that's rather astounding. But you know, certainly they should be there to make sure that the dollars go back into municipalities where promised.

You know, and we need to make sure there's adequate funding for infrastructure for municipalities. I note significant decline in the out years of this budget. Not a time for the government to sit on the sidelines on that front, and that includes recreation infrastructure. I think of places like the Rosemont rink, Mr. Speaker, that, you know, lights up a community. And there's nothing more I love than lacing up my skates and working with the kids out there. It's this kind of infrastructure that's needed, Mr. Speaker, and shouldn't be put at risk by a government that's not willing to be an adequate partner with municipalities.

I'll maybe touch just a little bit on some of the additional local

scan, Mr. Speaker, for the good people that I represent out of Regina Rosemont. Certainly all the pieces I laid around the economy and around the PST and around education and mental health, those all stand as priorities, Mr. Speaker, firing up the economy. And making sure that we're funding classrooms, because I know many recognize in our community the pressures that our classrooms are under and the inadequate support for the very important supports that are needed, classrooms that are growing in size at the same time as they're being reduced from the supports that are essential to learning.

And also holding folks back from being able to go at planning the renewal of infrastructure of schools like Rosemont School, Mr. Speaker, that's certainly in need of renewal. Great school, great people, great students, but a school that, you know, is certainly wearing itself out, Mr. Speaker. Or making sure that there's adequate funding to make sure that a great school like Dieppe School, Mr. Speaker, which was forced to shut down because of funding just a few years ago, could be reopened, Mr. Speaker, and there to serve Dieppe as a community and to serve that community but also serving Westerra, Mr. Speaker, that's expanding and growing as a new community just directly adjacent to Dieppe. These are important priorities when it comes to education.

Folks would also want to make sure that we have a government acting around community safety and crime. And I know this is something that's a challenge right across the province right now, Mr. Speaker, but they'd be expecting their government to step up and respond to the challenge. The real challenge that we're seeing through property crime, Mr. Speaker, so much of which as we hear directly from the leadership of the police is rooted in addictions and directly connected to the crystal meth epidemic, Mr. Speaker. That's ravaging the lives of so many and hurting our communities, but connected directly back to gang activity and crime and behaviours that are concerning too from a public safety perspective, from a community safety perspective.

It's also about making sure our police have the adequate resources that they need and that we're investing in actions to go at the gangs, Mr. Speaker. These are areas that this government has really dropped the ball on, Mr. Speaker, for some time and the issues have come home to roost in a real challenging way for so many. And of course we have an economy that's weak, and that doesn't help these situations, Mr. Speaker. And so many that are dealing with the challenge of poverty that needs to be actioned as well.

I know folks who want me to talk about the incredibly long waits, unacceptable waits in our emergency rooms, Mr. Speaker, and to be challenging the government to be utilizing resources to address those waits that are a concern to anybody who's needing those services.

And I know they'd be wanting me to address the issue of Pioneer Village, Mr. Speaker. Pioneer Village has provided such vital and important and compassionate care to so many for so long with incredible workers throughout it, but it has been left to decay, Mr. Speaker. And actions are needed obviously to make sure that there's quality placement and supports for residents and, importantly, making sure that there's a plan in place to replace this valued infrastructure for the health care workers who sign up to make a difference, and for the residents now and the residents

into the future who deserve the highest quality of care.

Mr. Speaker, it's clear to me that, both locally and across our province, this is a budget that fails to get the job done where it counts most for Saskatchewan people. It puts a very heavy burden on future generations. It's certainly not balanced fiscally: \$1.8 billion in new debt, Mr. Speaker, the highest level of debt in Saskatchewan's history; \$21.7 billion this year, shooting to \$26 billion in just a couple years, tripling the debt in just the last 10 years, a trajectory that's unsustainable into the future. Can you imagine the next decade of debt tripled again from \$25 billion to \$75 billion?

I'm getting heckled from the Education minister who failed to lean into his cabinet, who failed to make the case to his government, Mr. Speaker, who failed to stand up for the teachers and parents and students at this critical time in our classrooms, to get the dollars we needed into our classrooms. And I guess that's maybe why he's relegated himself to chirping from his seat, Mr. Speaker.

But I'm disappointed because I have to say, I've got time for that minister as a person. That minister gave me some hope that we would see something better at a time where our classrooms are frankly at a breaking point, far too often teachers without the supports they need and deserve, Mr. Speaker. And I expect more, we expected a heck of a lot more from that minister during the treasury board process and at the cabinet table to get the resources that are needed to build the future that's so dependent on education. I expect better from the Deputy Premier and the Minister of Education to heckle from his seat during a budget debate that's so relevant in the lives of others.

And we get the Minister of Social Services making noise again here, Mr. Speaker. I wish he'd make a whole lot more noise fighting for supports for the vulnerable in this province.

Mr. Speaker, this is not a balanced budget on any front. It's not balanced in our ERs [emergency room]. It's not balanced in our schools, and certainly not balanced financially. It puts a heavy burden on future generations. A government that has tripled the debt, that's doubled the PST, that's hamstrung our economy, and that's failed to invest where it counts — as such we certainly won't be supporting the budget, Mr. Speaker. And I'll move an amendment at this time. Mr. Speaker, I won't be supporting the government's budget.

I move the following amendment:

That all the words after "That the Assembly" be omitted and the following be added:

has lost confidence in the government and disagrees with the government for tabling a budget that piles on debt, fails to invest in classrooms, and does nothing to reverse the damage to people and our economy caused by the increase and expansion of the PST.

Mr. Speaker, I so move.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the member for Regina Rosemont, seconded by the member for Saskatoon Nutana:

That all the words after “That the Assembly” be omitted and the following be added:

has lost confidence in the government and disagrees with the government for tabling a budget that piles on debt, fails to invest in classrooms, and does nothing to reverse the damage to people and our economy caused by the increase and expansion of the PST.

Is the Assembly ready for the question? I recognize the member for Saskatoon Nutana.

Ms. Sproule: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I am incredibly honoured to be able to second the motion that has just been put on the floor by my good colleague from Regina Rosemont. And I just want to express many thanks to him as our Finance critic and also to our staff who have been working incredibly hard. Obviously, Mr. Speaker, the opposition has a short turnaround to respond to budget documents, and our staff has done an incredibly great job in preparing us for these debates as we go forward.

Just a little shout out as is the usual to people in Saskatoon Nutana. It’s been my honour to represent them since November of 2011, and I think this is my seventh or eighth budget now since I’ve been elected and learned a few things about budgets, Mr. Speaker, over the last few years.

And it reminds me of being a parent sometimes. You know, you’re going to read stories to your children, and sometimes there’s a scary part in the story so you just kind of skip over it because you don’t want to scare anybody. So you just omit that part and then you carry on to the happier parts of the story because you don’t want to scare people by what the story is.

And budgets are stories, Mr. Speaker. And what I’ve noticed — and I think I’ve done this in previous years — is, what I notice is what’s not being talked about in this year’s budget. And we see that happened in the Throne Speech as well, again painted as a really happy story with lots of good news. But really, Mr. Speaker, when you read between the lines, when you look deeply into what’s being told and what’s not being told, I think it’s really a different story.

And people need to know the truth, Mr. Speaker. And I think it’s important for the role of the official opposition to do that work to identify things that aren’t in the budget or information in the budget that may not be fully, fully presented. And I can see why the government wouldn’t want to fully present some of the story, Mr. Speaker.

I think the good place to start would be . . . And I’m going to talk quite a bit about debt, Mr. Speaker, because I think debt is the story that the government isn’t talking about. Very brief mention of it in the minister’s speech yesterday. And again, there is the page, public debt page, and it’s page 48 of the budget document and I’ll refer to that quite a bit, Mr. Speaker, because I think it’s a very, very, very important part of this story.

Balancing a deficit is one thing, Mr. Speaker, but expanding debt at the rate this government has expanded debt goes completely contrary to things that they were saying not so many years ago. And I just want to share some of the comments on the record that

the former premier, Brad Wall, liked to say when he was talking about debt. And I have a few quotes that I’d like to get on the record because that’s a very different story than the story that we’re hearing from this government today.

So on October 12th, 2012 the premier of Saskatchewan, he had this to say. He said:

. . . what the government has said is that when the debt is paid off, we do need to be ready prior to that date with some ideas, the best ideas that we can glean as we canvass them around the world.

And he goes on to say:

. . . Mr. Speaker, if we keep making progress like we have, this province most assuredly will be debt free . . . We’re going to pay off some more in this term. We’re going to complete that job, and then we’ll continue to put money away for future generations, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, that was in 2012. So seven years ago the premier was saying that we “. . . most assuredly will be debt free.” That’s a completely different story than what we’re hearing from this government seven years later, six and a half years later.

Now let’s fast-forward, Mr. Speaker, to March of 2014. And what did the premier have to say in March in 2014 about debt? He said:

. . . it would be the preference of the government as a positional stance to pay off all of the debt, the general debt of the province, the general operating debt of the province first, and then start to save . . .

Today everything’s still on the table. The official position as reflected by the Minister of Finance in the budget hasn’t changed. The official position is, let’s pay [off] the debt . . . first and then start saving. Typically you pay more interest on debt than you can in some of the funds in terms of return.

And, Mr. Speaker, I’m going to talk a whole lot more about the interest on the debt because that’s part of the story that this government is not telling in its budget document.

[11:30]

Mr. Speaker, the premier goes on to say:

. . . we’ve heard from Saskatchewan people. I’ve heard from caucus. And we’ve heard Saskatchewan people say, you know, we in Saskatchewan, we’d like to pay off unsupported debt. This is unsupported debt we’re talking about. There’s no structured payment on principal that happens, as members opposite know, only when government wills it to occur, as our side of the House has done with 44 per cent reduction in the debt.

So, Mr. Speaker, the people of the province are saying, pay it off first, and then start the savings.

So, Mr. Speaker, that is five years ago, in March of 2014 when the budget was released. So five years ago we had a premier

talking about paying off debt like it was important. And all of a sudden now, instead of it being important, they've actually tripled the debt, Mr. Speaker. So what happened? What happened to a government that was bragging about paying off the debt, and now they're saying, what's the problem; debt is fine. I don't know what's happened, Mr. Speaker. Although I think the Finance minister alluded to, it's the complete and total addiction with resource revenues that I think has caused a problem for this government, and they realized their addiction a little too late, Mr. Speaker.

Last quote from the former premier, Premier Wall. This is only four years ago, March 25th, 2015. So four years ago, Mr. Speaker, he said, he talks about the big, giant orange credit card, and I find that really humorous, Mr. Speaker. Because rather than talk about it, what this government had done is they've created a brand new, big credit card that's green and yellow. And I think it's really funny to hear the premier talk about the orange credit card when we have a government right now that has a \$6.1 billion green and orange credit card.

And he talks about that in 2015. He said the credit that was in place when this government came into power was "\$6.8 billion in debt." And he says:

. . . our position's been pretty clear and the position of the Finance minister's been clear as well. Let's pay off that credit card. Some of the borrowing's at 9 per cent. Some of their borrowing that we're paying off is at 9 per cent. So what did we do with some of the money, with some of the record revenues? We've reduced the credit card by 3 billion. We paid off 44 per cent of that big, terrible orange credit card.

And, Mr. Speaker, I think if you fast forward to 2019, these words of the former premier of Saskatchewan ring hollow. He was not at all on track with his predictions about debt. This government was not at all on track on their predictions about debt. Now they've got themselves in a pickle because they've committed to tripling the debt, Mr. Speaker, rather than taking heed of their former premier.

And I think you'll remember those are the heady years, Mr. Speaker. When this government came to power, they had over \$2 billion in savings to deal with. We don't talk about that much anymore, Mr. Speaker, but I think we should. This government inherited a savings account which we tried to pay down debt with, cleaned it out, promised legislation that would cause them to put away any surpluses into a savings account, a rainy day savings account. That legislation, who knows what happened to it. Maybe it's still there somewhere at the cabinet table, but we haven't seen it tabled in this House, Mr. Speaker.

They made all kinds of promises because they were flush, Mr. Speaker, more revenues than this province has ever, ever seen. And, Mr. Speaker, what did they do with it? They spent it as fast as they could and now they are spending at the same rate when those revenues aren't there. It was a bit of a come-to-Jesus moment, I think, when the Finance minister indicated that oh, I guess we can't rely on resource revenues. Mr. Speaker, that Finance minister and her predecessors should have realized that when the money was coming in. And how could they possibly deal . . . recognize it when the money was no longer there, Mr.

Speaker.

It's just bad management. It's bad forecasting, Mr. Speaker. It's getting heady with the revenues that were coming in when oil was well over \$100 a barrel, Mr. Speaker. And that was the pattern that this government started. And I think what you see now is the net result of that failure to recognize that reliance on resource revenues should have started in 2011 and not in 2018, Mr. Speaker. That's part of the problem that we're dealing with right now, and that's why the debt has ballooned to where it is, Mr. Speaker.

Now they'll talk about investments in infrastructure — and certainly that is things that other governments have done — and record investments. But what's the net result? It's debt for our kids and our grandkids and no suggestion in this budget about how that's going to be dealt with. That's one of the things that the minister never even talked about is how are we going to deal with that debt in the future because she doesn't care. She only has to say one word and everybody claps and that word has nothing to do with the burden this government is placing on our kids and our grandchildren in the future.

And, Mr. Speaker, that's irresponsible for a government not to even talk about what their debt management plan is going to be. It just keeps going up, Mr. Speaker. And as you know I referred to it as the Nike swoop. If you look at the side of the Nike shoes and this, you know, "just do it," that's what they're doing. They're just doing it. They're jacking up the debt to record, record proportions, and seem to have no regrets, Mr. Speaker. No plan to deal with it and no regrets.

Instead of shining a bright light on the debt and unequivocally dealing with it, we have a government that's just happy to table a razor-thin surplus. And of that surplus I wonder, Mr. Speaker, why couldn't 10 million go to education and get them back on track in education. Or 20 million. There's a surplus of 54 million.

But I don't know what the Minister of Education was talking about at the cabinet table because we know the deficit in education was created three years ago, and they are still not back to that level. And then schools are growing, number of students in classrooms are growing — teachers are dealing with less and trying to do more. And if that's innovation, if that's what this minister thinks is innovation, Mr. Speaker, that's an insult to the teachers, the parents, and the students who are trying their best in the schools of Saskatchewan today.

I just want to talk a little bit about the way they tell the story of debt, Mr. Speaker, in this budget. And I went back to some other budgets and I started looking at it. In 2005, 13 years ago, Mr. Speaker, the debt . . . Now you'll remember back in 2005 this was only GRF [General Revenue Fund] debt. So the only debt that we saw was the GRF debt. But they also included Crown corporation debt in their budget document, so they had two categories. And in 2005 the GRF debt was \$7.7 million and that included the schools that the NDP government did build and the hospitals that the NDP government built in those years, Mr. Speaker. That was included — \$7.7 billion — and the Crown debt was \$3.6 billion. That's 13 years ago.

Let's fast-forward seven years ago, Mr. Speaker. What were we looking at in 2013? Well the budget told us that the General

Revenue Fund debt was down 3.8, but there was this new category of debt that somehow had been carved out of the credit card and put onto the mortgage, Mr. Speaker. So this is their mortgage debt that they like to talk about, and that was already \$4.8 billion. So if you add the two of them up that's 8.6 billion, which is more debt than this government had in 2005, excluding the Crown debt.

So in — what year are we looking at here? — 2013 their debt that they complained so bitterly about and that Brad Wall promised to wipe out was actually more in 2013 than it was in 2005. And God knows that wouldn't include the rate of inflation, Mr. Speaker.

Now let's fast-forward to this year. What's the story? You notice on page 48 of the budget document that the swoop is getting longer, because they hate to lose the early years where the money was flowing in and they actually were able to start off with a savings account of \$2 billion, use that to pay down debt, and then oil was \$140 a barrel. So they hate to leave that. You will notice in other years . . . There's only four or five years that are showing, but these guys now have to include about 15 years to tell this story so that they can show how great they were in 2009 and '10, Mr. Speaker, after they inherited a \$2 billion savings account, which they promptly cleaned out.

I think it was actually more than 2 billion if you talk about the Crown savings and the assets in the Crown sector. These guys don't like to talk about the Crown sector, Mr. Speaker, and we know why. We know why they don't like to talk about the Crown sector, Mr. Speaker . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . And they like to heckle from their chairs about it. But the fact of the matter is, is that there was substantial savings when they took over government. They spent it as fast as they could and then they got us into this situation.

Twenty-six billion dollars of debt projected for 2023, Mr. Speaker. They are holding the GRF spending to \$6.2 billion. That's this balance that they talk about. Mr. Speaker, if you add the mortgage debt to the credit card debt of this government, it is \$15 billion . . . projected to be \$15 billion. This is what the former Premier Brad Wall used to call the orange credit card.

Their credit card and mortgage debt — because now they split it into two categories — will be \$15 billion in 2023. Mr. Speaker, that's incredible when you think about it. And the way they tell the story. The way they say, well GRF debt and then SaskBuilds debt. Well that's something completely different; that's mortgage debt.

Mr. Speaker, debt is debt is debt. And this government is not telling the full story to the people of Saskatchewan. They're focusing on a razor-thin surplus of \$54 million in this year's operations.

Mr. Speaker, let's take a look at supplementary estimates. You talk about a \$54 million surplus. I can tell you that in the last five years in supplementary estimates — so these are above and beyond the budget — Advanced Education has taken up \$93 million in extra money after the budget; Agriculture, 53.6; Corrections and Policing, 2; Environment, a whopping \$123.8 million. So if you even average that out over five years, that's probably about \$35 million a year. Government Relations has

taken an additional \$300 million; Health, \$153 million. Divide that by 5, that's \$30 million a year, on average, that Health is taking in supplemental estimates because they can't get the utilization rates right.

Mr. Speaker, let's look at Social Services. In the last five years in supplemental estimates, they've taken \$184.7 million. Divide that by 5, Mr. Speaker, \$35 million a year. What's the surplus this year? \$54 million. This is a way to look at utilization. I'm challenging these ministries to look at their utilization estimates, because if you're seeing \$184 million in Social Services over five years in supplemental estimates, I think there's a problem, Mr. Speaker. And again it's not telling the story. It's not telling the full story to the people of Saskatchewan in the middle of March when they table the budget, Mr. Speaker.

I do want to spend bit of time talking about the servicing of government debt. Mr. Speaker, one of the things I've learned when we look at budget documents is to look at the footnotes. Footnotes tell a very, very big story. And in about 2014, this government started doing something very interesting with their debt-servicing reporting in the budget. They put in a footnote.

So in previous years when we reported our debt servicing, how much interest that we're paying, we would include the debt that the Crowns were paying because that's part of government debt. Even back in the days of GRF reporting, Mr. Speaker, we would still report the Crown corporation debt. So for example, in 2005-06 on the page — I'll give you the page number — 68 of the provincial budget, they had the cost of servicing debt, Crown corporation debt, and we had government debt. And at that time it was about \$839 million. A lot of money, Mr. Speaker, was going into debt in 2005.

Now let's fast-forward to '19-20's budget. Debt charges, general debt, is found on page 51 in the budget and it says General Revenue Fund, 494.7, so that's slightly down from 2005. Pension liabilities now show up in this amount, Mr. Speaker, and then other general debt.

There's a footnote. There's a footnote, Mr. Speaker. So they're telling us in this budget the debt charges are about \$700 million. But the footnote tells a whole new story, Mr. Speaker, because no longer do they show Crown corporation debt in this figure. So they're saying debt charges are 700 million but, Mr. Speaker, I had to go back to Public Accounts from last year.

And there I'm looking on page 60 and 61 in the Public Accounts '17-18 to find out just how much did Crown corporations pay in servicing debt. And that is found on these pages. And I can tell you if you go across to the column that says total for 2018, Crown corporations paid \$511 million in debt last year, in last fiscal year '17-18 — \$500 million.

Where is that in this budget document, Mr. Speaker? It used to be reported as part of the budget, but it's not there. The footnote says, oh, "Debt charges do not include amounts pertaining to Government Business Enterprise Specific Debt. These amounts are reflected in Net Income from Government Business Enterprises." It's buried, Mr. Speaker — \$500 million of debt for our Crowns — and that's buried in this document and you won't find it.

[11:45]

So if we're looking at 700 million in debt charges, this is just interest. And they're bragging about a \$54 million surplus, Mr. Speaker. 700 million just in government operation debt and pension liabilities, over 500 million in Crown debt.

And you know, Mr. Speaker, what else is not in here is our mortgage interest. And they'll say, oh well, we don't worry about that because that's the P3s [public-private partnership] and we don't worry about that because well, quite frankly, we can't even get that information, Mr. Speaker, because the way the financing arrangements are set up with the P3s. But if you look at the amount of debt of the P3s and compare it to our Crown debt, let's just do a little math, Mr. Speaker, or projections. Crown debt is 11 billion — well I'll go back to this year — 9 billion for Crown, and P3s is 4.6. So P3s are about half of what Crown debt is right now.

So if Crowns are paying \$500 million in debt, you can be sure that what we're paying for our P3 projects includes about \$250 million in debt servicing. I don't think that the companies that signed the contracts are happy to pay the debt and not pass it on to the taxpayers. It just doesn't make sense. Although we've tried to get those numbers, we're not allowed to see them because of the commercial sensitivity of P3s which to me is the biggest difficulty with P3s, is everything that's hidden.

So those numbers are hidden in this as well, Mr. Speaker. We don't know what we're paying on the P3 debt because we're not allowed to know. But if you add up another 250 million, we're looking at \$1.2 billion in debt servicing in this province right now. And that's not being told. The story is not being told by this government and I think that's a shame, Mr. Speaker.

And I hope that people take a look at these numbers because I think it's on page 51 in the budget for anyone who's out there listening. You will see there's a nice little footnote that says, oh by the way, we didn't include Crown debt interest charges. So, Mr. Speaker, I don't know if I'm reading these numbers right. I would like to see it presented properly in the budget document so that people of Saskatchewan are told the full story and that's not what they're getting from this government.

Unfortunately, you have to look to Public Accounts for that information and I don't know why there isn't a big hoo-ha in the rotunda when Public Accounts comes out because, Mr. Speaker, all the numbers are here in black and white. And I tell you, when it comes to looking for those numbers, that's something that we do every year in July. When most people are out on holidays, our lucky legislators get to look at public accounts. And it's kind of like when the new phone book comes in, Mr. Speaker. You get to see what the real numbers are.

Mr. Speaker, I want to talk a little bit about the PST and the impact of the PST, doubling of the PST. This government doesn't like it when we talk about that, but if you look at the actuals again for PST in 2015-16 — so this is only four years ago — what are the actual PST revenues? \$1.3 billion, basically. So that was before they doubled the tax. And their forecast for 2018-19 is \$2.2 billion. So, Mr. Speaker, that's a billion-dollar increase in PST.

And I was really amused to hear the minister happily telling us about her, you know, the reductions that this province has seen in income tax. And she was very proud of the numbers: \$631 million has been removed from the tax rolls on the income tax side. But, Mr. Speaker, when you compare it to 900 million on the PST side, people are not . . . She has not only wiped out any gains made by anybody on the income tax side, she's actually added another \$300 million and climbing to the PST side. So I just think she's not telling a story. It's unfortunate, and I think it's a real, real problem for Saskatchewan taxpayers.

Here's what she said yesterday, Mr. Speaker. She said, "Since 2007 personal income tax exemptions have removed 112,000 people from the . . . tax rolls." Mr. Speaker, they weren't removed from the PST rolls last time I checked. Diapers, kids' clothing — like, it's just unacceptable, Mr. Speaker. "Tax reductions introduced over the past decade are providing more than \$610 million in annual income tax savings . . ."

Six hundred and ten, and then 900 million in PST. I don't know how she can be proud of that, Mr. Speaker. And that bragging I think was called out today by the Canadian Taxpayers Federation who put it pretty straightforward in the media: we're paying more in taxes. But you don't hear it from this budget. You don't hear it from this government. They just won't talk about it, Mr. Speaker, and I think that's not a good deal for the Saskatchewan people.

As we're saying, Mr. Speaker, the Sask Party is tripling the debt, they're doubling the PST, and we have a flattened economy. People are struggling. Students aren't getting the supports they need. I talked a little bit about education earlier.

Other things that, you know, words that our Finance minister didn't or wouldn't say in her budget speech or in the budget: suicide, Mr. Speaker. You don't see anything about suicide in this budget. We've been calling for a suicide strategy. My colleagues from the North have been calling for a suicide strategy. Those words aren't in this budget, and I think that says a lot about this government, Mr. Speaker.

Another word that's not in this budget is poverty. It just isn't there. I did a word search. It's not there in her speech. It's not in the . . . And if that's not a concern for this government, and if it's not something they think they should be addressing, why on earth are one in four children in Saskatchewan getting food from food banks, Mr. Speaker? Like it's on the verge of criminal when you think about it.

This is a government that has record revenue still and they cannot come to find anything in their heart to talk about all those kids in the food bank, Mr. Speaker, all those kids living in extreme and abject poverty where they don't even have enough to pay income tax to get the deductions, Mr. Speaker. They don't have the down payment for the low-income house, Mr. Speaker. That's not even who we're talking about here. And this government, this Premier, will not recognize that. They won't talk about it. They won't answer questions about it, and I think it's shameful.

Another thing that did not show up, these two words did not show up in the minister's speech yesterday. Those two words are climate change. Mr. Speaker, we are in a collision course with global warming. The science is out. Believe it or not, the science

is there. Facts are facts. And you know, some members here might say, oh fake news or whatever, but I think that would be ridiculous too.

And officially this government has certainly acknowledged that climate change is a concern. We've had some changes made. This government has actually introduced a carbon tax for high emitters. And you know, the Minister Responsible for the Environment has done that and he has put a price on carbon for high emitters. They've put a price on carbon for coal when they did the carbon capture sequestration project. I don't understand why they wouldn't put a line item on my SaskPower bill for the carbon capture project because that's a heck of a lot more expensive than the new tax that we have to deal with now, Mr. Speaker, but it's not there. So they're not talking about climate change.

You know, and what they're saying is too late on some other things: reliance on resource revenues. You think they could have figured that out in 2010, Mr. Speaker, but they were so inebriated by the aroma of \$140 oil that they couldn't even pay attention to the fact that that might not be sustainable. And when they find out in 2017 that, oops, I guess we were spending too fast; oops, I think we've tripled the debt, Mr. Speaker, that's not the sign of a responsible government. And I can tell you previous governments would not have done that and they did not. They had savings accounts. They didn't triple the debt, Mr. Speaker.

I just want to make sure I've touched on what I have made notes on. My colleague from Regina Rosemont has referred to it as a narrow pursuit of balance. I think that's a pretty accurate description of this budget. Other people have said it's like a big parade with not much to look at. There's all kinds of, I think, epithets that could be nailed to this particular budget, Mr. Speaker. We don't see . . . I mean others are going to talk about education. I know my colleague from Regina Lakeview has a lot to say about that and so did my colleague from Rosemont, you know, the rising costs to people. We've said a lot about that already.

One of the things that . . . two other things I'd like to touch on this morning, and one is the GTH debt. It shows up in the estimates, Mr. Speaker, and there doesn't seem to be any sign of that going down. So I'm not sure what the Minister Responsible for the GTH was thinking he was going to accomplish when he fired the CEO [chief executive officer] and hired a Toronto real estate company to somehow divest of the land, when before he was trying to sell it, Mr. Speaker.

So GTH, that's a whole other story that we're going to keep watching. Because this is Saskatchewan taxpayers' dollars that went into that debt, and ultimately we hold the bag for those very bad decisions.

One other piece that I found on page — I didn't find it; it was pointed out to me — page 152 of the Estimates, it's a very interesting round figure, Mr. Speaker. It's \$100 million, and what it is is an equity repayment from Crown Investments Corporation of Saskatchewan. So they've taken \$100 million from the Crowns and moved it into the government's bank account, so to speak, Mr. Speaker. Now of course on a summary budget, you know, that nets itself out because the equity payment from the Crowns would go straight into the government coffers.

Why would we strip the Crowns right now, Mr. Speaker? They are making record investments in infrastructure. They are working really hard on staying up to what is the demands of this era that we live in in 2019. And this government sees fit to strip them of their equity. I can't believe it, Mr. Speaker. And this is something that I think the people of Saskatchewan should know what this government is doing to the Crowns, because that's threatening the Crowns. It's undermining the Crowns, and it's something I think that suits their agenda pretty darn good, Mr. Speaker.

So I just wanted to point that out again, page 152, an equity repayment from Crown Investments Corporation of Saskatchewan for \$100 million. And I understand much of that comes from SaskPower, Mr. Speaker, when they're at a point when they are so extended and their debt-to-equity ratio is over 75 per cent. And it's coming down — I'll acknowledge that very much — but they did peak out over 75 per cent, Mr. Speaker, and this isn't what they need at this point in time. We'll have more conversations about that in committee, Mr. Speaker, and I believe the minister and I are both looking forward to that conversation. I always enjoy committee with SaskPower, Mr. Speaker, and I am looking forward to that.

At this point in time, I believe I've gone on long enough. I'm sure other people may think too long, but I appreciate the opportunity to get on the record with some of these concerns about this story, this budget story that for me has too many footnotes and is missing a lot of the pieces that should be in there. So, Mr. Speaker, at this point I am very proud to be the seconder of the motion, and I look forward to what other people have to say about it.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Indian Head-Milestone.

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's always a privilege to enter into the debate, especially around a budget. And this budget of course, in particular, is really a significant budget for this government, Mr. Speaker.

I've been in the House for many budgets, and I've never had the opportunity to second a budget, so that's a special occasion. And of course the first eight years, I was sitting on the opposition side and they never asked me to second a budget, Mr. Speaker. And I'm not sure they'll ever ask me again after this next half-hour or hour or however long I have to speak.

But it is absolutely a privilege to second a balanced budget, but not only a balanced budget, a budget that is right for Saskatchewan. It's the right type of balance, Mr. Speaker, for Saskatchewan, so I want to thank the Premier for tapping me on the shoulder and giving me the opportunity.

I also want to congratulate a number of people before I get into my remarks regarding the budget itself. I want to really commend the member from Humboldt on the delivery of the budget yesterday — the work that she had done with the budget the year previous under the duress of the Humboldt crash of course; this year, Mr. Speaker, getting it to balance — and congratulate her on the work that she has done and all those within her office, not only her ministerial office but within the Ministry of Finance. The work that they do leading up to the day yesterday is really

quite incredible.

Not only do I want to thank those people, but I also want to thank all the members that sat on treasury board. There is an awful lot of hours. I have never sat on treasury board before, but there is an amazing amount of hours that are put in in meetings, meeting with the various ministries. I've had the opportunity to present in front of treasury board, but I've never sat on treasury board. So I do want to thank the premiers — former Premier Brad Wall and this Premier. One more thing, I really want to thank them . . . Don't ever put me on treasury board please, Mr. Speaker, because it is an awful lot of work.

[12:00]

I also want to recognize those that have come before us, although I guess the premier, former premier, Brad Wall, I guess we can just call him Brad from now on. I want to thank him for all the work that he did leading up to this as well as our Finance minister prior, Kevin Doherty, who expended an awful lot of political capital over the two or three years that he was the Finance minister to get us to this point. They set us on this target and it was the right target, Mr. Speaker.

I remember sitting in deliberations of budgets where we were saying we should have a three-year rolling budget so it's easier to plan for Highways and other ministries, that if we had a three-year rolling plan how much easier it would be. It's easier to say than it is to do, but I would say this is one of the first times that we've ended up with a three-year rolling plan where we started three years ago saying, we've got to get to budget. We've worked hard over the last two budgets, Mr. Speaker, to get to this point, not only a balanced budget but the right budget for this province, Mr. Speaker.

So both Premier Brad Wall and Kevin Doherty deserve a lot of credit, but who deserves the most amount of credit over these past two years are the people of Saskatchewan, quite frankly. We worked to balance the budget. They're the people that balanced the budget, Mr. Speaker, and it was over every sector, Mr. Speaker. It wasn't just one area that was picked out. There were some revenue issues for sure, some increase in taxes. There was some correcting of spending, Mr. Speaker. It was a combination. It was a balanced approach, Mr. Speaker, that got us to this point. But it's the people of Saskatchewan. And I know, two years ago after the 2017 budget when you'd go out and talk to constituents, did they like everything we did? Absolutely not. In fact some of them, you know, were frustrated. But when you talked to them . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . The member from Athabasca, I'm going to deal with him a little bit later, Mr. Speaker, and so I would ask him to remain in his seat and try and keep quiet because, Mr. Speaker, we'll have a little bit of debate on his input into the future.

Mr. Speaker, I was saying though that the people of Saskatchewan struggle a little bit with some of the decisions that were made, but when you explain to them that at the end of this, when we come out of this in three years the budget is going to be balanced, are you okay with it? And to a person, you would hear over and over again, yes. It's difficult now, but if you can guarantee me in three years the budget will be balanced, I'm okay with what you did. And, Mr. Speaker, that was why it was so well received yesterday by so many groups because we said what we

were going to do, we worked towards it, and we accomplished what we were going to do, Mr. Speaker.

I want to just quickly talk a little bit about why it was so important for our government, and especially our government, why it is so important to get to the point that we were able to witness yesterday and why it was so important . . . And I don't want to put words in the former premier's mouth, Brad, but you know, you just have to go back. And I know the opposition at times . . . And we've brought different things up. We'll talk about, you know . . . I don't know if we've mentioned it very often, but like they closed I think 52 hospitals. I think we have mentioned that, and we had mentioned a little bit about school closure. I forget the exact number, but we did talk a little bit about school closure. And we started talking about that stuff. And I know the members opposite will say, oh man, I was in grade 2, or I was barely born when that happened, Mr. Speaker.

It's extremely important. That's exactly why we need to bring it up over and over again, so we don't forget our history. It's the same as, Mr. Speaker, in through the '80s. It wasn't only in Saskatchewan that deficit budgets were the common, Mr. Speaker. They were a common across Canada — every province, every party. It didn't matter whether you were a right wing conservative party. It didn't matter if you were a centre-of-the-road liberal party or you were a left wing party. Bob Rae ran just as many deficits in Ontario . . .

An Hon. Member: — Bigger.

Mr. McMorris: — And maybe even bigger than Grant Devine did here in Saskatchewan.

And we had a person in this building at that time and he saw what that did to the province moving forward. And he said we'd never do that again, Mr. Speaker. And we got into a position where we ran a couple of deficit budgets, and it would have taken everything in that premier's power to make sure that we balanced it. That's why we're on the track, and that's why we got to celebrate yesterday, Mr. Speaker, because you don't forget your past. You're reminded of your past. You learn from your past and you react to that and balance a budget in 2019 and '20, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to quickly say that, you know, for those members on treasury board . . . And I hear one behind me very often, Mr. Speaker, that was sat on treasury board. But I remember early on in our government's days and talking to the Minister of Finance and the member from Melfort — of course a great friend, Rod Gantfoer — that started this government on its way and did an amazing job.

But he said, you know, in treasury board it's always interesting, because it's not that you have to decide between good decisions and bad decisions. Those are easy. If it's a good decision, yes, absolutely. If it's a bad idea you don't go with it. But it's good decision between good decision, and that's the difficulty for those sitting on treasury board day in and day out. There are not many bad decisions come to treasury board. They're weeded out well before. It's trying to decide priority to priority, good decision to good decision. And, Mr. Speaker, we have been served very well by the treasury board this year as we have in the past, Mr. Speaker.

Quickly I want to thank not only the people that I have, whether it's the Premier present, the past premier, Mr. Speaker, the former Finance minister, Kevin Doherty, the present Finance minister. I have mentioned Rod Gantfoer, and there was . . . I can't help but not mention the one Finance minister that was in between, Ken Krawetz, Mr. Speaker. So I've got the Finance ministers covered. And I remember as being, a few years ago as being the Minister of Health, the most important friend was the Finance minister, Mr. Speaker, so you've got to cover your bases there.

I want to thank also people that are in my personal life and professional life. Nicole Entner-McCullough who runs my constituency office — I've thanked her before — she's absolutely a great person to look after that office. Those people are at the front for us and do such great work, but as many of us have . . . And I listened to the Minister of Finance as she talked about Susan, her constituency assistant who . . . They become more than your constituency assistant. They become your friend. And Nicole certainly has been that for me, so I want to thank Nicole for the work that she's done.

I want to also recognize the boys. I don't think they knew the budget happened yesterday. I don't know why, Mr. Speaker, but I want to thank them for the support that they have given me. I was talking to a colleague and, you know, I've been elected for 20 years so I think Craig would have been about six or seven at that time. That's hard to believe that most of his life I've been involved in politics. And I'm not sure Mark knew that I was ever involved in politics. But anyway I want to thank them, as well as Cindy for the work that she has done to support me through this career, through the ups and the downs.

One quick add: Craig is . . . I don't if anybody follows the X Games but they have another kind of . . . it's not during the competition but they have . . . called the X Games Real Snow, where they pick four or five riders from around the world that put together a one-and-a-half-minute video part. That came out yesterday and you have to vote online: xgames.com. Craig McMorris, not Anto Chamberland or anybody else, just Craig McMorris. So certainly hoping for another X Games medal into our house but from the brother, which would be kind of great.

So and the last thing I want to do before I move on and get into the budget is thank the constituents of Indian Head-Milestone. I am so blessed. I had the opportunity, you know, to represent them for a very long time. And I am liking them more than I think they're liking me because I've been around for a long time. But I had the opportunity on Saturday, this past Saturday, to meet with a couple of groups, three or four guys regarding SaskTel issues, another fellow in Fort Qu'Appelle. And every time I walk away from that, you know, you're just really . . . Even though you say you're serving the public, what they give back to us is absolutely amazing. So very, very fortunate to represent such a great community, or community in a greater sense of Indian Head-Milestone.

The right balance: what a great term for this budget. First of all it was the right balance because it balanced revenues and expenses. And that's what a balanced budget is, is when your operating expenses match the revenue or are below your revenue. That would be balanced. If you incur debt to put into infrastructure, that does not mean the budget is not balanced, Mr. Speaker. And the opposition are going off on that but, Mr. Speaker, it is a

balanced budget on every sense of the term.

And it didn't come by accident. It came by a lot of hard work. It's a balance between revenues and expenses. It may be a \$34 million surplus, not a large one, but certainly a balance. It's a balance between what the people of the province want and new taxation. There are no new taxes, Mr. Speaker. That was done initially to get us to this point. So no income tax increases, no new taxes. That's what the balanced budget is and that's why it's right for Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

It looks at infrastructure spending. And infrastructure spending has been, I really think, the hallmark of this government over the last 10 years because, honestly, when we became government in 2007, the infrastructure, the depreciation of our infrastructure, the former government living off of that depreciation of our infrastructure, Mr. Speaker, has been addressed. More to do, but certainly has been addressed over the last 10 or 11 years. More to do; more infrastructure needs. And we hear it all the time from the members opposite, Mr. Speaker, and more to do.

And I can tell you from my perspective, the two days in the 20 that I've enjoyed the most in this career was . . . I don't exactly remember the exact date, but I was in North Battleford when the former premier announced the opening of the Saskatchewan provincial hospital in North Battleford. And the second most important date in my political career was three weeks ago when the present Premier, and will be a long-serving premier, announced the opening of the Saskatchewan Hospital in North Battleford.

And that didn't happen without a lot of hard work from the members in that area. Both members did a lot of work to make sure that we were aware of it. I had the opportunity of touring that old facility about four to five times in the years that I was the Health minister. And I know the opposition, who were then government, said there needs to be something done, but never got it done, Mr. Speaker — never got it done. And this government had put the investment into that infrastructure, over \$400 million, Mr. Speaker.

And when we hear the opposition . . . And it's a crime. When they hear, they say, you know, debt is way too much; we shouldn't be going into debt. Then we wouldn't have built the North Battleford hospital. Is that the alternative? We wouldn't build a new hospital in Moose Jaw. We wouldn't build a new children's hospital. We wouldn't build new schools across the province, Mr. Speaker. Is that the alternative? Because quite frankly, the people of Saskatchewan need to know that. The NDP are against going into debt for infrastructure. That's perfectly fine. Then let's just erasing all the pieces of infrastructure this government has put in place, let alone any infrastructure this province needs into the future, Mr. Speaker.

It's the right investment when it comes to the Crowns, Mr. Speaker. We have invested mightily through the Crowns. And I just heard, you know. . . I would say the one thing that — it's not disappointing — that I'm going to miss by seconding this budget speech is that I don't get to listen to all their speeches before and then comment on them. I only have got to listen to two. But boy, there is enough right there on those two to do the rest of the day, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the last member that spoke . . . and I'm going to talk a little bit more about her when I want to kind of go after the NDP. I'm not even wanting to go after the NDP right now, but they talk about equity stripping from the Crowns. And I just thought, are you kidding me? How can you stand in your place and talk about equity stripping, where just in SaskPower alone, in 10 years, we have taken one dividend from them? And it was 73 per cent of their equity. Out of 10 years, we've taken one.

Under the NDP, Mr. Speaker, on just SaskPower alone, 2001, what do they take? And I didn't even think you could do this: 181 per cent, Mr. Speaker, of the . . . How do you do that? But they did. How do you do it? In 2002 they really relaxed their cull from SaskPower; they were only at 114 per cent of the equity of SaskPower, Mr. Speaker. And the member just stood and said, can you believe these . . . us, this party is equity stripping. Unbelievable, Mr. Speaker. And I didn't even want to get into that yet, Mr. Speaker. I wanted to talk about the investment our Crowns are making.

In Saskatchewan right now, connectivity is so extremely important. And the member from Kelvington-Wadena and the member from Melville, who was on that file before, have done yeoman's work to look at where we need to invest in Saskatchewan. SaskTel is reinvesting. They talk about, oh, people, you better be afraid of what this government is going to do to the Crowns. Well if reinvesting in the Crowns, people should be afraid of, then get scared because this government is doing it.

Mr. Speaker, it's the right balance. And I'm going to go off on a little bit of a — I don't know even know how long I've been — but a little bit of a tangent here. And so how do you determine what is the right balance, Mr. Speaker? And it just came to me as I was thinking about what I was going to say.

This is going to be a little bit of a long-winder, so bear with me please. I was sitting in an office in Regina about three months ago, four months ago. It was KPMG. And there was the accountants there and there was a couple of bankers. And it's not about me; it was about my one son who is lot better snowboarder than he is a business manager, Mr. Speaker. He's not really too terribly interested in that, so I guess that's kind of falling on my shoulders. And so we are there, and he has a person that kind of looks after some investments for him, and we have another guy that kind of looks after paying the bills and making sure that's all paid up. So a banker and an investment guy and the auditor or accountant.

[12:15]

One thing I will say about the banker is he's very good at getting more credit cards to Mark. Because I can tell you if they ever excavate or do an archaeological dig over all the ski hills, they're going to say, who is this Mark McMorris guy? He's lost a credit card at every ski hill in the world, I think, Mr. Speaker.

Anyway, I digress. So we're there, and we're trying to figure out kind of the road forward and what is the right balance for him moving forward. And he wanted to buy a property in Whistler, and he did. And you know, it's funny because the investment guy is probably saying, I'd rather have you put it into some solid investments: GICs [guaranteed investment certificate] and

whatever and long-term RSPs [retirement savings plan] and that type of thing. The banker is saying, well there's a mortgage here. I think you should put it into property; I think that's where you should go. And it's trying to figure out where a person should be. And as a father, I was kind of torn. Like, I hate to try and direct him one way or the other, so you give him the pros and the cons.

And then I thought about my upbringing and I thought of, you know, the two men I admired the most was my dad and my father-in-law. And I thought of my dad and what would he say? And my dad was kind of a unique individual in that he was in the armed forces and was brought back after his brother was killed in the war, and his father had had a nervous breakdown. And so he came back to a farm that was fully in debt. In fact he worked for many years to get that farm out of debt. And so much so that I don't think my dad ever borrowed a cent in his life, never had debt because of his upbringing. So you have that in the back of mind.

In fact, you know, he ran a grain elevator as well. We lived in a company house and I thought it was great because you're on the main street of Lewvan — location, location — but then I realized Lewvan is only 20 people. So you can't really say location, location, location in Lewvan because there's really only one location, Mr. Speaker.

He never bought a new vehicle and then I got thinking, he did buy one new vehicle and I'll never forget it. It was in the mid-'70s and GM [General Motors], for any of those that will remember, GM came out with a truck that was pink, like a really pink truck. And it had sat on the lot for about two or three years till the price finally went down, so dad bought a new truck. It was, like, three years old and it was pink but that was his only new vehicle.

And I'll never forget a couple years later, I got my licence and I said, Dad, I'm going to stay for whatever practice after school, can I take the vehicle over to Milestone? Can I get the car? And he goes, no, Mom's got the car. You've got to take the truck. Was it ever hard as a 16-year-old to drive into Milestone, Saskatchewan, the late '70s, in a pink half-ton. But I really liked sports and I wanted to stay after school so I drove the pink half-ton to work.

The other person that I admired most was my father-in-law. And he was a twin, the youngest of 11 people in a family. They farmed at Lampman. He loved farming. So you can imagine, after the whole family has gone through, there's probably not a lot to be turned over to Leo. But he loved farming and he was the person that would always say, if it makes sense, take a risk. Go into debt. And he bought farm land and he made a living and he raised a family of four by taking chances, by taking risks — and always, you know, calculated risk — but by borrowing money.

And so now I'm sitting in this office. I got my father who's never borrowed a cent in his life. I got my father-in-law; that's all he's done was borrow to make it. And I'm supposed to advise my son of what is the right balance. I think he struck the right balance and I think we have struck the right balance with this budget.

Mr. Speaker, I'm kind of getting probably close to my time, but I haven't done what I . . . I haven't really talked a little bit about the opposition. Now I don't know if I do it well but it's what I

enjoy the most, Mr. Speaker, is when I talk about the opposition. And, Mr. Speaker, you know when you talk about the baker's dozen over there, it doesn't quite balance. In fact, Mr. Speaker, what I would say that baker's dozen over there is more . . . they're more out of balance than they are balanced. Some people would call it out of touch with what Saskatchewan is thinking. I think in this context, we can call it out of balance.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I don't know if you've ever had . . . of course you have, coming from Cupar where you've probably had some wheel weights go off a tire. And you're driving the car and the wheel weights are off and, you know, if you go kind of slow it's not too bad, but you get going a little bit faster and it starts vibrating. And so then you got to slow down a little bit or, in the wintertime the snow gets on the inside of the rim and it sets a tire out of balance. You know, if you go a certain speed it's not too bad, but you get going too fast and it starts shimmying.

And I really thought that was an awful lot what I saw in the opposition yesterday. You know, if they were kind of quiet and going slow they weren't too bad, but when they started overreaching, it really got out of balance. And they were out of balance quite a bit yesterday.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, I had a couple people say to me, who haven't been here very often, how does the Opposition Leader stand for 24 minutes and ask questions about needing more money for education, needing more money for health care, needing more money for addictions, needing more money for social services, needing more money for whatever, and then the last question, needing more infrastructure — asked all of those questions in the first 24 minutes, and in the last minute he says, but don't go in debt and don't borrow money. Balance the budget and don't borrow money, Mr. Speaker. How do you balance that? That's completely out of balance, Mr. Speaker.

And so that was the messaging that I think . . . and it's always interesting when we invite so many people in and they can set up about 40 chairs around here and 140 over there, Mr. Speaker. It's always a nice visual, I find, Mr. Speaker, is that they can see that that opposition was out of balance. It was out of balance or out of touch with what people are feeling and saying in this province.

I watched the news at 6 o'clock last night, and the Premier spoke very, very well and the Minister of Finance had. And they had the Leader of the Opposition and he had his same lines, of course: it's not balanced, even though the operating debt isn't going up. But they've got themselves, themselves, only themselves convinced that it's not a balanced budget. They've also got themselves convinced that there is way too much debt, that investing in our province, investing in infrastructure — not operating debt, but investing in infrastructure — is the wrong way to go, Mr. Speaker. And those were his lines.

And so finally the reporter said, but is there anything good in this budget? Like what about a school in Moose Jaw? And he kind of got this grin: yes, oh yes, yes, that's really good; we really like that. Except he just finished saying, don't go into debt for infrastructure. So how can you have it both ways? And it was just that the messaging from the opposition was completely out of balance. If they had been quieter, I think it would've been smoother. But they overreached and it just got to be a whole lot of vibration going on, Mr. Speaker, because they were

completely out of touch.

And there's, you know, different ones there that I do want to mention, you know, talking about overreaching and being out of touch. How does a member from Regina Lakeview drive by three or four brand new schools in the city and say it's a crisis? In fact her term today was, the education system is at its breaking point. Breaking point? Mr. Speaker, I think there's a bit of vibration going on. Mr. Speaker, I don't think the education is at its breaking point.

Mr. Speaker, are there pressures? Absolutely. Did the education system have to live like every other system did to get us to this point where the budget is balanced and that it's a brighter future into tomorrow, Mr. Speaker? Absolutely they did. And we asked a lot of them. They've come through, Mr. Speaker, and we're going to continue to invest in education. We're going to continue to invest in our teachers and our buildings across the province because that's what the right balance for Saskatchewan is, Mr. Speaker.

I always find it interesting too, the juxtaposition between the critic who is saying that it's a crisis situation and that education is at its breaking point and almost lighting her hair on fire, Mr. Speaker, and then you get the Minister of Education talk about balance. That guy is so balanced. Like he doesn't go here and he doesn't go there. I just admire how he can just answer the question. I just admire him for that. That's balance, Mr. Speaker.

I would say that there is one thing that the opposition has got balanced, Mr. Speaker, only one thing that the opposition has balanced. We have been in this House for three weeks. There hasn't been any questions from the member from Athabasca on highways. That's the right balance, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, not balanced . . . I admire the opposition because they have put a person in charge of mental health and only mental health. It's probably the first time that the opposition has had one critic specifically for mental health, and I admire that because it is an issue. It's an issue across the province. Addictions are more now than ever before and, you know, we're working on addressing that and I admire them for that. But what is balanced about only finding fault? And maybe I have missed it. I haven't heard a word from the opposition talking about the new hospital in North Battleford. Can you believe that? Can you believe that they would stand in here day after day and criticize what we're doing in mental health — and we're not doing enough; fair enough — but when the 400, the biggest investment this province has ever made in a health care facility and they can't even mention a word and it's for mental health, Mr. Speaker, I think that's shameful. It's more than out of balance, Mr. Speaker.

And the other thing that I would say to that member opposite is, mental health is extremely important in this province and so is addiction services, absolutely. But she'll stand in her place and criticize us for not putting enough in. But it seems like more than criticize. It seems like she's accusing us of not caring about mental health and accusing us of not caring about addictions. And I know she's had some challenges close to her in her personal life, but I don't think there's a person on this side that doesn't have a friend or a family member that struggles with mental health issues. I had some more to say on that, but I don't think I'm going there.

The member from Nutana, the member from Nutana, wasn't that interesting yesterday? I don't know if anybody else saw it, but I'm sitting here and a few of us around in this area, in the cool side of the class here, were sitting watching the member from Nutana. And you know, there was a lot of people in the House and so the heckling was held right to pretty much a minimum. I might have said something, but we held pretty much to a minimum. And the member from Nutana was sitting there and she wanted to say something because day in and day out she chirps from her seat. As the members in the front will say, she's chirping and muttering and just kind of throwing barbs across as much as she can. And she was sitting there all day yesterday through that. And it wasn't a very long budget speech. It was 26 minutes — not that I was counting because there has been some longer ones, Mr. Speaker. And so she was chirping. She couldn't say anything and she was getting redder in the face and she was more and more uncomfortable and she was shaking her head. It's like she had verbal constipation, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I wished she would have gone out to the lounge and threw out a whole bunch more words and just said something because I'm sure she would have felt relief, Mr. Speaker, because she stood there and she turned red and she was struggling because she really wanted to say . . . I mean some will . . . There's another verbal thing that people can have, but I think it was the opposite for her, Mr. Speaker. She sat there and just couldn't say a word.

Mr. Speaker, I think I'm getting to the end here. I do want to say that, you know, balance is weighing kind of equal portions on each side. It's when the bubble hits the middle. And, Mr. Speaker, this budget puts that bubble in the middle. But one thing that isn't balanced in this House, Mr. Speaker, is this House itself. The bubble is way off. And I know over the last year or two or three, the opposition thinks they're moving that bubble a little bit. I don't think they are, Mr. Speaker, and I don't think they will for a very, very, very long time. Mr. Speaker. One thing that's out of balance in this province is this House, Mr. Speaker, because it's the right balance for Saskatchewan.

I will be sitting down real soon, okay. I will be supporting the motion put forward by the member from Humboldt. I won't be supporting the amendment put forward by the member from Regina Rosemont, Mr. Speaker. This is the right budget for the right time in a beautiful province like Saskatchewan. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the member from Moose Jaw Wakamow.

Mr. Lawrence: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. To the member from Milestone, thank you. You've left a hard road to follow there that's going to be some work on my part.

So first thing I want to do . . . It's been a while since I've been able to weave myself in with my other duties to actually get up and give a reply to a budget speech. So I'm going to take a few minutes to do some thank yous, and I'll try not to take the 10 or 15 minutes it took me to get through last time doing all my thank yous, but it's going to take me a few.

[12:30]

First and foremost I need to thank my bride, the lady who has put up with me . . . Well she's put up with me for over 30 years, but

we've been married for almost 30 years — Marjorie. She encourages, supports, and backs me, all at the same time holding me accountable. It's amazing how she does that to get that balance. She has all the support in the world, but if I get out of line she is the first one to ground me. And occasionally — she's like the rest of us — she goes on social media, but she occasionally has to take time off of social media because sometimes those keyboard warriors get out of hand and she gets pretty upset. So she'll actually take time off social media so she doesn't get herself in trouble when in an argument in social media. So for that I want to thank her very much. That was a hard one. The member in front of me always makes fun of me because I get so passionate and get so upset, so I'm going to move on from that.

I want to thank my boys for all their support. They've been there thick and thin, knocked doors with me, come home from wherever they're at and come help me campaign when they go through . . . Yes, they're great kids. We've all got our flaws but they're my boys.

My mom and dad and all the work ethic that they've instilled in me . . . I'm going to tell a little story there. When I got interviewed for my job at SaskTel, about halfway through the interview they said, we work between a 35- and a 37-and-a-half-hour work week. Is that going to be a problem? And I looked the gentlemen and ladies interviewing me right in the eye and I said, well what do I do after Tuesday? And you could see the stunned look and they go, Tuesday? And I said yes, you work 12 hours on Sunday, 12 hours on Monday, and 12 hours on Tuesday. There's 36, so does that mean I get the rest of the week off? And they're like no, no, no, we work between seven-and-a-half- and eight-hour days, so it wasn't a problem. And that's the work ethic that I got instilled in me from my parents, who worked in the oil field. And mom always held down a job or two. Dad always worked in the oil field, and when things were slow in the oil field, mostly when the opposition was in power, he would go get a second job, you know.

So that's the kind of work ethic that was installed in me. And you know, mom's finally retired. Dad, I'm trying to talk him into retiring. He might get there this year; he's not sure. You know, he is only right around that 70 years old so, you know, and he's still working the oil field down in Estevan. He's just one of those guys that just wants a little bit more. He doesn't quite have everything in place that he wants to retire.

I also want to send a thanks out to my board — Ryan, Sherry, Myrna, Lee, Emma — for all the hard work that they do on my board on my behalf in my constituency association. Ryan's been there from the beginning, works hard all the time, and another guy that holds me quite accountable and holds my feet to the fire and asks the hard questions.

I want to thank a couple of past board members, Paul and Evelyn, and all the hard work they've done over the years of working on my behalf, working on my constituency association. I don't see them as much now that they both have gotten jobs here in Regina, but still live in my constituency, and all the hard work they did.

And contrary to what the Minister of Finance and the member from Milestone had said, my CA [constituency assistant] is actually the best CA in the province. She is the . . . [inaudible]

interjection] . . . Yes, has to be with having to manage my stuff. So she does a great job. I just wanted to thank her.

Last but not least, the people of Moose Jaw Wakamow and their continuing support. They're still there. They're there for me. I sit down; I go for coffee with lots of our seniors. We get together. We talk. I'm out at the hockey games. I visit at the hockey games. We get out. We chat. And again, they're not afraid to hold me accountable or say, good job; thank you.

Door's open. They know that and they come and visit. Some come in because they need a hand. Some come in because they actually want to say thanks. So I want to thank the people of Moose Jaw Wakamow for their continued support.

And one last thank you I want to say is to the Minister of Finance and the treasury board for all their hard work. Now occasionally they meet while we're in session, as well as when we're out of session. So they occasionally make it a little tougher to manage numbers. However, being that we're a team on this side, we make sure we're there for all our other team members. So I want to thank them for all the hard work that they do.

So on to the budget. And you know, I'm trying to figure out how to word this because I'm not a lawyer. I'm not a doctor. I'm not a teacher. I'm just a regular guy who's had a bunch of different jobs, you know. I've worked for a couple of different Crowns. I've driven taxis. I've worked retail. I've done whatever it takes to put food on the table in my house. And sometimes that meant I had to work two or three jobs. I was in the oil field too, so there were times when you went to the shop instead of going moving the rigs because the drilling rigs were shut down. And I'd go get a second job, but I tended to work at a place where I would hang out when I'm busy. So I usually got a job waiting tables and bouncing at one of the establishments in Estevan that I'm sure the member of Estevan might have been familiar with in her younger days. I don't ever remember her being there because she's so much younger than me. So Estevan was a good town to grow up in.

So maybe it's because I'm not as learned as those folks, I needed to put our budget and the balancing in simple terms. So I've had some help doing this because I got some help doing this. So if you're borrowing money, is the budget really balanced? Yes. Government operational debt will not increase in 2019-2020.

So let's put that on a household level because that's the easiest way for the people and the families of Saskatchewan to get it. So a family has income and expenses each month. And many families also own a home, and they may have a mortgage on that home and maybe a car loan and a payment as well. So the family pays all their expenses as well as the mortgage and the car payment. If at the end of the month the family has some money left over, they'd balance their books with the surplus.

So I'm going to say that again in case the opposition missed it. If they have some money left over, they'd balance their books with the surplus. The mortgage and the car loan do not amount to more income for the families. They're investments that incur debt, like our schools, like our hospitals, like our highways, like our major infrastructure projects. And the family uses its income to make payments on that debt. It's not a rent-to-own scheme as some members opposite have called it before. It's more like a

mortgage.

Now because I'm not a lawyer and because I'm not a doctor, I've never had the cash to buy a house outright and just pay cash on it. I've had to come up with the down payment and pay a mortgage, so I've done that.

So let's bring it back to the family. Revenue exceeds expenses, so it forecasts to pay all of our expenses, which include our debt charges on investments like schools, hospitals, highways, and Crown infrastructure. Government does have a debt as the result of those investments, but the government has also built what a growing province needs. That debt is being managed responsibly. Saskatchewan has one of the lowest net debt-to-GDP [gross domestic product] ratios in the country, and Saskatchewan also has the second-highest credit rating in the country.

Some jurisdictions have chosen a path of ongoing deficits with no plan to balance. In Saskatchewan we've chartered a different course with a sustainable plan that ensures a bright future for our children, my grandchildren, and for the generations to come. That's important. That's maintaining that balance.

Now the member from Milestone talked about stripping of SaskPower dividends. So I worked at SaskTel, was my last job, so I'll talk about the NDP's SaskTel dividend history. So we'll just go back to 2000. So in 2000 their net income was 93.3 million. The dividends were 87.3, so that's 94 per cent — not all of it, but almost; 2001, 101.5 million and the dividend was 91.3 million, 90 per cent; '02, 65.1, took 58.6, 90 per cent; '03, 83 million they made, 76.6 million they took, 92 per cent; '04, 94.5, 88 million they took, that's 93 per cent; '05, 64 million, they took 57.9, 90 per cent. '06 and '07 things must have got better or were getting close to an election. So in '06 SaskPower made 72.5. Did they leave them all the money to invest in? These are years I'm working there now. And no, they only took 50 million, which was 69 per cent; '07 it was 84.1 million and they took 30 million, and that was 36 per cent.

Now I've worked at the Crown, that particular Crown, when I was there. And I remember I was part of the bargaining community for . . . No, no, that was after that. I was working there and I remember 0, 0, and 0, and then 0, 0, and 1, as our raises under the NDP, if I remember correctly. So I remember a whole string of zeros under the NDP, who are friends of the Crown.

I also remember it was just before I went to SaskTel when SaskPower and SaskTel went on strike. Now that was when they were in power: the opposition, the friends of the Crowns, the protectors of the Crowns, the friends of the unions and the Crowns. They had to go on strike because the government of the day wouldn't listen.

So I find it almost laughable. I don't know if "hypocritical" is parliamentary, so I won't use it, but they're . . . I won't call them that, but the fact that they say one thing now but did another thing when they were in power it's, like I said, laughable. You know, the past doesn't matter unless it was the past before them, because they do talk about the Grant Devine era.

And I grew up in Estevan, so I know exactly what the Rafferty

dam looked like before they built the Rafferty dam. And I know what it looks like now and it looked like before I left. It's 50 miles of water behind a huge dam, Alameda dam. Some of the best pickerel fishing in southern Saskatchewan you can find right at Rafferty dam. I've been there with my boys and my wife before; pickerel rigged literally as fast as I could cast it in. My boys were five and six back then. They would be reeling them in, and all I was doing was taking fish off the hook. I didn't even have the opportunity to fish.

So when we talk about investing in infrastructure, this is something that needs to be done in our province. And working in a couple of different Crowns when the Devine era was in power, and then under the NDP, and then under the Sask Party for their first four years when they had the opportunity to take government, I can speak personally what it was like trying to work under those. And finding money for infrastructure investments within our Crowns was — and I've spoke to this before, Mr. Deputy Speaker — finding the money to invest in the infrastructure for our Crowns was almost impossible under the NDP. Almost impossible.

[12:45]

They also talked about contracting out a little bit. Well when I worked at SaskTel when we did the first major upgrade to have Max TV, that was all contracted out. And was it contracted out to a Saskatchewan company? No, it was contracted out to an out-of-province company. Now I'm trying to remember which one it was because I'm not sure if it was Ledcor or one of the ones before that, because they're still . . . They have a presence in the province. So it's not always bad if you contract stuff out. It's only bad when we do it. Not bad when they do it; just bad when we do it.

So when you talk about talking out of both sides of your mouth, or do as I say, not as I do; don't take a look at that because the past doesn't matter. Well yes, actually it does because the best indication of future behaviour is past behaviour. So the fact that, you know, people sometimes have a short memory and they forget what happened when the NDP were in charge, it's really important to remember what they did when they were in charge.

So I'm going to touch on education because Moose Jaw had a really good announcement this year. We're going to build a brand new school. It's going to be a joint school, so really two schools. We're going to have the public and the Catholic system combined — Holy Trinity and Prairie South — combined to build a joint-use school to replace some of the older buildings on South Hill that are crowded, full, need a lot of work. And they've done a lot of work on this. By no means am I taking credit for this. Both school boards have done a lot of work. They've met with Warren and I and several Education ministers on moving this project forward.

But I'm going to talk about a few other schools and we'll see what they have in common. We've got École Ross School in Moose Jaw, Willow Bunch School in Willow Bunch, Briercrest School in Briercrest, Crane Valley School in Crane Valley. Now I'm not going to go through them all. I'm just going to go through the ones that affected Prairie South and our Holy Trinity. We've got the Artesian School in Spring Valley, Alexandra School in Moose Jaw, King Edward School in Moose Jaw, Wood Mountain

School down in Wood Mountain, Lafleche Mathieu Elementary, and I think that might be the last one on my list.

But these were all schools that closed in Holy Trinity and Prairie South. They were schools that closed under the NDP. They weren't all rural schools. There were schools right in the city of Moose Jaw that the NDP closed. Why did they close? Well people were leaving the province. They were done. Well the school boards of the day decided that after you guys defunded them, laid off the teachers and the teachers' aids, that they sold the assets.

So you know, again they sit there and they talk from their seats and, you know, they accuse us of doing the same thing. And you know, at times maybe we do heckle a little bit. But I'm just pointing out it's a do as we say, not do as we do. So we're building schools. We're building hospitals. We're building infrastructure, and to do this it takes money. And it goes back to that difference between a mortgage and a credit card. They talk about a credit card, but it's a mortgage. And if you're going to compare apples to apples, oranges to oranges . . . Like I said, I'm not a lawyer. I'm not a doctor. I'm just a guy who's worked, worked hard.

And a few other things: we'll talk about some stuff they didn't do, if I can get through the . . . No, I'm going to skip that. I'm not going to do that. That's too hard on me, and the member in front of me will make fun of me. So I get pretty upset when I talk about stuff like that.

So it's finding that right balance. And the only balance that I ever saw the NDP have when they were in government is the balance when it came to talking one thing but doing something else. And there was an almost perfect balance with that. It was, we're going to do this but no, we really are going to do this. So there was balance there. It's do as I say and not as I do.

So yes, it's a tight budget this year, but Moose Jaw gets a new school. Now you know what? That's going to make a lot of folks happy in Moose Jaw. And I'm sure it's not going to make everybody happy, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but we're going to work through that. The school boards have already set up, after yesterday, have set up a community meeting coming up in the next week or so at one of the high schools so they can sit and get input from the community: where is the best place to build this, how we're going to do this. We're going to work with them to make sure that that gets done. We're not just going to announce something.

There was a meme before the last election, and I'll talk a little bit about social media, and it was a great meme. It said it awesome. There was a picture of this beautiful, empty field and NDP talk of a new hospital in Moose Jaw, and then a picture of the brand new facility in Moose Jaw, Sask Party action. Just the difference. That's balance: do what you say we're going to do.

Holy, that time flies by really quick. I've got nine more minutes, they tell me. So I'm just going to hit a few more highlights because I don't want to poke the bear too much over there. A little bit. They're pretty quiet so I mustn't have bugged them too bad. So I'm going to highlight some stuff we talked about in the Throne Speech as well.

The Government of Saskatchewan has committed \$100,000 for the program as part of the 2019-2020 budget. So that's for our veterans, our Legions, our ANAVETS [Army, Navy & Air Force Veterans in Canada], our air force associations, the people who support our veterans across the province. This new program will assist the important work of supporting veterans and honouring the memory of our fallen heroes. So this is something I personally have gotten to work on.

This program will provide grants to Legions and ANAVETS branches as well as other branches that support our vets across our province. This program will allow funds to be used for capital infrastructure upgrades for veterans' service clubs, program supports for annual events and activities. And it was announced actually in November. Details on the program guidelines and application processes are actually being finalized in consultation with veterans' groups. So we've actually gone out and met with the veterans' groups and listened to what they have to say and are actually working with them to put the framework in place. That's what you do as a dialogue. You actually work with the groups out there. So making sure that we have the right balance.

Oh geez, I didn't even talk about all the long-term care beds they closed. But we're actually building a new one. So again, \$12 million for a 72-bed long-term care facility in Meadow Lake. So that's another thing they talk about a lot is long-term care wait times. If they wouldn't have closed, what is it, 1,700 beds . . .

An Hon. Member: — 1,200.

Mr. Lawrence: — 1,200 beds, 1,200 beds. 1,200 beds — like just think of that. So people remember that. They closed 1,200 long-term care beds. So in closing those 1,200 long-term care beds, what did they do? Well they laid off nurses. They laid off CCAs [continuing care assistant]. They laid off management. They laid off support staff. You can't close that many facilities and just consolidate. They laid people off. When they closed the schools, they laid people off. They laid off teachers. They laid off teachers' aids, 400. The hospitals, the schools — one a month for the schools, 52 hospitals in rural Saskatchewan.

They purport to be now listening to rural Saskatchewan. That would be a first. That would actually be a first I think in my adult life, that I've ever heard of the NDP listening to rural Saskatchewan. Because if I look at this side of the House and that side of the House, I'm pretty sure all the members from southern Saskatchewan are from rural Saskatchewan. I know they've got a couple of gentlemen from northern Saskatchewan there; that's part of rural Saskatchewan. But I don't really think they're accurate. Fast and loose with the accuracy of what they're saying — I think that's parliamentary — and fast and loose with the direction.

They talk about how they look at taking care of rural Saskatchewan and supporting our farmers. And I'm not a farmer. I'm a city kid. I helped grandpa hay in the summer on the farm down by Roche Percee, you know, so I know how to drive a tractor. I've hauled grain for my friends and usually they only got me to haul grain when it was barley. So if you've worked on a farm, you know barley is the one crop you don't want to haul because you've got to shower between each load, or that's what it feels like. It gets pretty itchy on a hot summer day. And I always got the old truck, the one without the air conditioning. So

it was long summer days but it was good work and with my friends.

So again, back to our budget. It is the right balance. It's the right balance for now and it's something to build on in the future. It's a promise made and a promise kept. We said we would balance the budget.

Hopefully they listened a little bit when I talked about the difference between a mortgage and a credit card debt when I brought it down to a family level, where somebody like myself can understand it. I'm not a lawyer. I'm not a doctor. I'm not one of those professionals that other members may purport to be. I'm just a regular guy. I'm just a guy that's worked. Well no, there are some good lawyers. I work with a couple on this side of the House. So I'm not saying all lawyers are bad. I've got some friends that are lawyers too.

I want to again thank everybody for all the hard work they did on bringing this budget forward. And with that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'd like to adjourn debate.

The Deputy Speaker: — The member from Moose Jaw Wakamow has moved to adjourn debate. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: — Carried. I recognize the Government House Leader.

Hon. Mr. Brkich: — I move that the House do now adjourn.

The Deputy Speaker: — The Government House Leader has moved that this House adjourns. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: — Carried. This House stands adjourned until Monday at 1:30 p.m.

[The Assembly adjourned at 12:58.]

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